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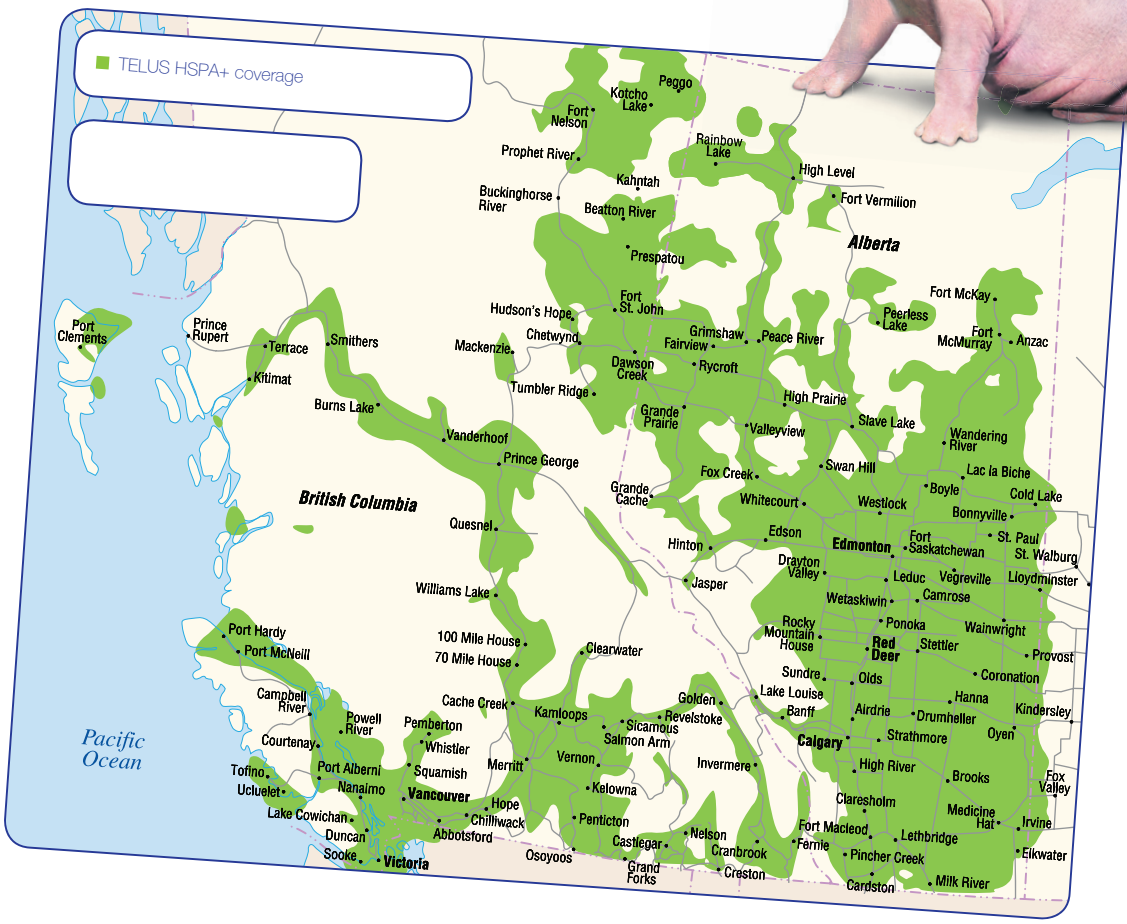

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Man almost freezes after hopping on moving train

RAILWAY An Alberta man came close to freezing to death on a moving train, RCMP say.

Early Friday morning, the man from Edmonton climbed onto a slow-moving train in Wetaskiwin, Alta., but the train increased its speed and the man was stuck for an hour, Staff Sgt. Patrick Webb said.

"This man is lucky to be alive. He is lucky he had a phone to call for help, and lucky we had the resources to dedicate to finding him."

RCMP were able to locate him by working with CP and CN rail, but by then his body temperature had already dropped to 32 C.

KRISTA SYLVESTER/
METRO CALGARY

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Celebrity Buzz pg 29
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Weather **Here comes the sun**

ROBIN KUNISKI/FOR METRO CALGARY

Tessa Bailey, 23, can't wait for the sun to come and warm up Calgary as temperatures are expected to reach a high of 4 C this week after a previous week of being in a deep freeze.

Insurers won't aid snow clearing: Spokesperson

Says city should raise taxes instead to manage removal

DARREN KRAUSE
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The city should raise taxes to pay for enhanced snow removal instead of turning to insurers, an insurance industry spokesperson told Metro.

That's why insurance providers won't be coming to the table to discuss contributions to the city's snow removal, according to Jeff Haley, government affairs manager for the Insurance Bureau of Canada's Edmonton office.

This comes on the heels of aldermen yesterday approving a future administration report outlining discussions with the industry, courtesy of a notice of motion from Ald. John Mar.

But, according to Haley, there's no chance that will happen. He said the industry believes it's the city's responsibility to manage snow removal, and that if Calgary needs more money, taxes should be raised.

"It sounds like what they're trying to do is offload that responsibility because they don't want to increase taxes," said Haley, adding that he wasn't certain there would be any cost benefit for insurers with this approach.

"It's not something we're interested in."

Meanwhile, aldermen approved two other notices of motion to address the fallout after last week's snowstorm that left homeowners stranded, commuters in peril — if they could even get their cars out from the snow — and the winter resolve of Calgarians tested.

Immediately, $2 million will be taken from the Fiscal Sustainability Reserve to ensure adequate snow clearing and removal in non priority-one areas for the remainder of 2009, if there is another major snowfall.

There was also $1 million allotted for one piece of clearing equipment in each of the city's nine clearing zones, specifically for residential areas.

"People want something done — and I think this is a start," said Ald. Ray Jones, author of the notice motion.

"Hopefully, we will ... address (snow removal) eventually and add something more to this budget."

Council also approved a look into 25 kilometres of strategic snow fencing, via Ald. Ric McIver's motion. A report is expected back prior to mill rate adjustment and could cost up to $500,000.

Cell tower criteria to be reviewed

DARREN KRAUSE
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COUNCIL Possible mass proliferation of towers to service new wireless providers has prompted city hall to approve a review of its criteria governing their installation.

Ald. Bob Hawkesworth proposed a plan for the city to consider the circumstances under which it drafts its letter of concurrence for Industry Canada's final approval for tower construction — but aldermen brought up several tower examples dating back 12 years, being a source of community outrage.

"There's not just a problem with over-15-metre towers," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart.

"The fact of the matter is we haven't reviewed the (freestanding telecom towers) criteria since 1998."

Ald. Brian Pincott noted a tower being built in his ward that the community was opposed to, yet Industry Canada got a letter of concurrence from the city — and he called the process "very frustrating."

Aldermen approved the issuing of a letter of non-concurrence in cases where communities opposed the wireless tower installation — and also the review of criteria for installation.

Wind Mobile spokesperson Chris Robbins told Metro last week the company would abide by any criteria, provided all wireless providers were required to adhere.

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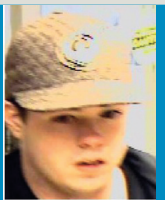

Suspect sought after 5 robberies

Police believe the same suspect, pictured, is responsible for four robberies in Calgary and one in Edmonton and are asking for anyone with information to come forward. The Calgary robberies occurred between Nov. 19 and Dec. 1. The suspect is described as Caucasian, 19 to 20 years old, six-foot-one, and 170 to 200 pounds with a medium to stocky build. METRO CALGARY

METRO INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR
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News in brief

POLITICS The website www.liepertmustgo.ca has received nearly 500 responses from Albertans on what they feel Ron Liepert has done to the health-care system, according to the Alberta Liberal party. They indicate the number of response from this site is even more than that of the Ask Premier Ed — which they say has only garnered 400 responses.

METRO CALGARY

Calgary tweets

• @studiotodorovic
I'll bet that at least half of Calgary is gonna do their Christmas shopping during the chinook weekend! #yyc

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WHAT'S ONLINE TODAY

Video Police and search crew members attend the funeral of a Nova Scotia boy who died after getting lost in the woods at **metronews.ca/canada**

Your Money Allan Small offers a look at what 2010 may hold for investors at **metronews.ca/investing**

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Evidence delays Ponzi case

80,000 pages of documents leave fraud trial on hold until March

The next court date for two men accused of defrauding global investors out of millions won't be until March so their lawyers can wade through 80,000 pages of documents.

Gary Sorenson and Milowe Brost are both charged with fraud and theft over $5,000 in the alleged Ponzi scheme.

Police allege thousands of investors in Canada, the United States and overseas were swindled out of about $400 million between 1999 and December 2008.

Brost appeared in a Calgary courtroom with his lawyer yesterday, but refused to speak to the media as he left. Sorenson was not present.

His lawyer, Don MacLeod, said outside court that it will take a while to get through all the information in the case.

LARRY MACDOUGAL/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Don MacLeod, lawyer for accused Ponzi scheme participant Gary Sorenson, speaks to the media at the court building yesterday in Calgary. The next court date will be in March.

"Commercial cases generate paper. That's a simple truism," he said.

Brost and Sorenson have been free on bail, and Sorenson's conditions were loosened slightly yesterday to allow him to more easily visit his sick mother in British Columbia.

> **"Commercial cases generate paper. That's a simple truism."**
> Don MacLeod, lawyer

The two men were charged Sept. 13. Brost was arrested at that time, but Sorenson was still at large and police said they believed he was living in Honduras.

He was arrested Sept. 29 after stepping off a plane at the Calgary airport. Police say he returned voluntarily after discussions between his lawyer and government officials.

Sorenson and Brost are next scheduled to appear in court March 25.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

City scraps idea of off-leash dog park fees

KRISTA SYLVESTER
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City council was told they were barking up the wrong tree, so they obeyed and scrapped the possibility of off-leash dog park user-fees.

Ward 11 Ald. Brian Pincott initially suggested council look into user fees to offset maintenance costs in off-leash dog parks, but had a change of heart during council yesterday.

"Why I ended up not supporting it was the argument I heard that parks are a public good and parks are good for everyone," Pincott said.

"We will just have to budget for maintenance costs in the parks budget and I am happy with the decision," he said, adding he isn't sure how much it will cost "but it won't be that much of a difference."

Dog park users are relieved to hear about the decision, but some still believe the city's off-leash parks need to be better maintained.

> **"I think this is the first smart thing I have heard coming from council."**
> Tammy Sawatzky, dog owner

"I think this is the first smart thing I have heard coming from council, even though it shouldn't have been suggested in the first place," dog owner Tammy Sawatzky said.

"I don't go to many off-leash dog parks because of how dirty they are and the lack of garbage cans so I hope they still clean them up."

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CALGARY OBITUARIES

CalgaryObits.com notes the following deaths in our community:

BISSON, Elena (nee Moroni)
CHERPAK, John William
CUMIFORD, Donna Lynn
DeCOSTA , Rita (nee Bertoia)
DICKEY, Peter
DYLER, Glenn
GASPAR, Milan
HANSEN, Genevieve Olive Bertina
HATCH, Ada Irene (nee Severn)
HEBERT, Ginette Martina
JACQUES, Lena Henrietta (nee Halldorson)
JOHNSON, Doris Gertrude (nee Blackburn)
LANGE , Kenneth
McGAFFIN, Geraldine (Geri) Helen (nee Andrews)
MILLER, Vernon Edward
MUNRO, Hazel (formerly Brown)
NOURSE, Lee Roy
OAKLEY, Beth Sanjean (Sandy) (nee Remund)
PLUMMER, Fred (Freddie) A.
PROSSER, Estella Avis (Perkins)
RABBIT, Flora (Nona)
RAFFAY, Margaret
ROBB, Erva
RONDEAU, Paul Bernard Honore
ROSS, Audrey Mary
SCHRAMM, Mary (nee Hanowski)
SHELLEY, Helen Winnifred (nee Larter)
SMITH, Anne (nee Conway)
WHITLOCK, George Walter

For full obituaries go to CalgaryObits.com

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ENCANA TransCanada PETROCANADA BD&P Alberta Foundation for the Arts arts Canada Council for the Arts Conseil des Arts du Canada metro

Council exploring fire prevention options

City council has ordered a review of fire prevention measures in an effort to explore the feasibility of installing sprinkler systems in all new homes. The report is due back to council in December 2010. **METRO CALGARY**

Cookie program bakes up 'self-esteem'

KRISTA SYLVESTER
krista.sylvester@metronews.ca

Enabling people with disabilities is just one goal Cookies on the Go accomplishes with its work program that helps provide jobs to people with disabilities.

The Calgary Progressive Lifestyles Foundation's cookie program gives 200 clients the opportunity to work in a fun atmosphere baking cookies, according to organization spokesperson Jaimie Dachy.

"It's also a self-esteem boost and it's a lot of fun for those working here. They aren't just baking but it's also a coffee shop so they also get to interact with customers," Dachy said.

SunnySide

Dachy said the program provides people with disabilities a chance to work when they may not otherwise have the opportunity — and the hands-on experience.

Cookies on the Go's special Christmas baskets have been so popular that already over 400 have been sold, and there is still a demand for more.

"It's a nice alternative to the traditional wine type gifts this time of year. Everybody loves cookies."

ROBIN KUNISKI/FOR METRO CALGARY

Right: Cory Desjarlais, from Cookies on the Go.

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City may have to wait for pesticide bylaw: Ald.

COUNCIL Health groups are applauding council's recent decision to reject a proposed pesticide bylaw and are asking for a stronger pesticide bylaw but two city aldermen say that won't happen anytime soon.

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) praised the city for its effort to address the issue, but believe the rejected amendment was not acceptable. "We're glad this one didn't pass because it would not have provided sufficient protection and it really would have only entrenched the status quo and mislead Calgarians," CCS co-ordinator Evie Rodway said.

Rodway is urging council to redirect city administration to come back with a stronger bylaw; however council killed the bylaw yesterday for good.

Ward 11 Ald. Brian Pincott said despite 85 per cent of Calgarians wanting a pesticide bylaw, current council members don't seem to be on the same page.

"Frankly, I don't think that will happen until after next election," he said.

Ward 9 Ald. Druh Farrell agreed and compared the issue to the smoking bylaw.

"I think we will get there eventually and Calgarians will appreciate it," she said.

KRISTA SYLVESTER/ METRO CALGARY

Calgary in brief

ENERGY Forty-five per cent of Albertans would like nuclear power plants to be considered on a case-by-base basis, says a provincial report; 19 per cent said the government should encourage proposals and 27 per cent were opposed. "Albertans have told us that we shouldn't be closed to new generation technologies that could provide clean, low-emission power," said Energy Minister Mel Knight. "At the same time Albertans have identified concerns with nuclear power that ... future applicants will need to fully address." **METRO CALGARY**

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Donation will help expand centre's services
The Distress Calgary Centre will be able to expand the level of services it provides after a $25,000 donation from Husky Energy, according to the centre's executive director Carol Oliver. METRO CALGARY

Ignatieff sounds off on PM's politics

HARRY HODGE
Metro Canada

The Michael Ignatieff whirlwind blew through Edmonton yesterday, but the Liberal leader didn't mince words during a brief interaction with local media.

After speaking to faith groups at the Robertson-Wesley United Church, Ignatieff commented on Canada's role at this week's environmental summit in Copenhagen, Afghan detainees and provincial politics before jetting off to a reception at the Petroleum Club.

"(The Tories) are playing games with the Canadian public. They've got no plan at all."
Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff

The fact that a bogus announcement was put out earlier in the day by an environmental group stating the Canadian government had a new climate change plan only highlighted what Ignatieff denounced as a federal government with no clue on how to deal with pollution matters.

"(The Tories) are playing games with the Canadian public," he said. "They've got no plan at all."

Another hot-button issue for Ignatieff and the federal Liberals of late swirls around records involving Canadian-transferred Afghan detainees, and claims from the party that the Tories and Defence Minister Peter MacKay are keeping these documents buried to avoid scrutiny by parliamentarians and the general public.

"It's time for them to explain what they've been doing (with those records)," Ignatieff said.

During his brief time with reporters, Ignatieff was wary to steer clear of venturing opinions on politics within the province.

"A federal leader, especially a Liberal leader, has to watch what he says in Alberta about provincial politics," he said. "There is obviously change going on in the Alberta political scene.

"It seems to be a good thing, having more competition."

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News in brief

INVASION Four men forced their way into a home in Conrich and locked an elderly woman and a toddler into a bedroom, stealing currency, jewelry and electronics Friday, according to RCMP. The woman and one-year-old were not injured in the home invasion. Officials believe the suspects fled in a white Honda Ridgeline and a silver BMW with steel wheels and no hubcaps.

ASK ED The First "Ask Premier Ed" video responses are now online after attracting more than 400 questions from Albertans. Premier Ed Stelmach answers questions on Bill 50, transmission lines, carbon capture, and other environmental queries in the first two videos posted to the YourAlberta YouTube account and the Government of Alberta website, according to officials.

RESTITUTION Since it became law in fall 2008, the Victims Restitution and Compensation payment Act has removed more than $11 million in real estate, cars, and cash linked to criminal activity from Alberta communities. "This legislation is doing precisely what it was intended to do," Minister of Justice Alison Redford said in a release.

HOMELESS The province yesterday announced $6.2 million in funding for the Calgary Homeless Foundation for the purchase of 52 permanent homes for Calgary's homeless.
METRO CALGARY

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Police cleared in Cape Breton man's death

The RCMP says an investigation into the police shooting death of a Cape Breton man last year has found no wrongdoing. John Simon died after he was shot by an RCMP officer at a home on the Wagmatcook First Nation reserve on Dec. 2, 2008. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada

Liberal big wig aims for mayor gig

The national director of the federal Liberal party has put his name on the ballot for the Toronto mayoralty race in October 2010. Rocco Rossi, left, has already resigned as the party's top administrator and fundraiser, effective Dec. 31. In announcing his candidacy yesterday outside Toronto City Hall, Rossi spoke in Spanish, French, Italian and English to declare: "I'm big, I'm bald and I've got bold ideas for the city." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Asbestos lobby gets federal funds

Group denies boosting climate-change skepticism

Go Green

Ottawa has been funding an asbestos lobby group that promotes the work of prominent climate-change skeptics.

The revelation comes as Canada's delegation struggles to avoid being cast as the villain at the Copenhagen climate conference, and environmentalists are urging the government to stop financing the group.

On its website, the Chrysotile Institute promotes a chapter that it says debunks the asbestos health-risk hoax from the 2007 book titled Scared to Death — From BSE to Global Warming: Why Scares Are Costing Us the Earth.

But Chrysotile Institute president Clement Godbout says his organization actually has no position about the book's chapter on climate change.

He says his group is only promoting the book for outlining how the science of asbestos, and its potential health risks, have been systematically exaggerated by the "anti-asbestos lobby." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sierra Club

- The Sierra Club of Canada now urges the government to stop funding the Chrysotile Institute, which has received more than $20 million from the federal government since 1984.

m.metronews.ca

ScanLife

Haiti's new prime minister arrives in Ottawa today with an unusual message: Haiti is open for business, and Canada is ready to help. Scan this barcode for the full story.

Ottawa **Wounded soldier carries the torch**

PAWEL DWULIT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Andrew Knisley, left, passes the Olympic flame to Kerry Piccinetti in front of the Chateau Laurier downtown yesterday. Knisley lost his leg while serving in Afghanistan in January 2009 and was released from the hospital just two weeks ago.

Diplomat yanked after allegedly spitting at cop

TANZANIA A Canadian diplomat has been called home from Tanzania after allegedly spitting at a police officer.

Tanzania's foreign minister identified Jean Touchatte, a private secretary at the Canadian High Commission, as the official involved in the Dec. 9 incident.

The Tanzanian government said Touchatte spat at the policeman during a traffic jam in the Dar es Salaam. He was questioned by police but later released because of diplomatic immunity. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Violent protests at Canadian-owned mine in Mexico expected
The death of a Mexican activist who strongly opposed the presence of a Canadian company in his hometown is predicted to spur violent protests. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Certificate struck down, suspect freed

A federal judge has struck down a national security certificate against a Syrian-born man arrested eight years ago on terror suspicions.

The ruling today by Federal Court Justice Richard Mosley effectively frees Hassan Almrei. The government had been trying to deport Almrei on a security certificate — a seldom-used provision of the immigration law for removing suspected terrorists and spies.

Almrei's lawyer, Lorne Waldman, said his client was "very excited" about the ruling. Waldman had not yet read the full decision, and said he and Almrei would comment later.

The government argued the Syrian native's travel, activities and involvement in a false-document ring were consistent with supporters of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

The ruling says there were reasonable grounds to believe Almrei was a security danger when detained in October 2001, but there are no longer reasonable grounds to believe that today.

It also says federal cabinet ministers breached their duties of "good faith and candour" to the court by not thoroughly reviewing the file prior to re-issuing the certificate against Almrei in February of last year.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Certificate cases

- The government has initiated just six certificate cases — four terror suspects, a hatemonger and an alleged Russian spy —since the 9-11 attacks on the United States.

Deported alleged Sikh extremist missing

BELIZE Officials in Belize don't know what happened to an alleged Sikh extremist who made global waves when he bought a passport for the tropical paradise after being ordered out of Canada.

Iqbal Singh

Iqbal Singh has quietly vanished.

Ten years ago next month, Singh left Toronto for the Central American fun-and-sun destination.

His arrival in an unsuspecting Belize caused a media sensation. The spotlight glare was apparently intense enough to drive Singh from the oasis he found upon paying about $50,000 US for a passport through a since-cancelled immigrant investor program.

Singh was suspected of belonging to the Babbar Khalsa, a terrorist group intent on establishing a separate Sikh homeland.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Higher charges for payday loans could backfire: Watchdog

American-based payday loan companies will move into Ontario in a big way now that the province has set an "astronomically high" maximum charge of $21 for every $100 borrowed, the Ottawa-based Public Interest Advocacy Centre warned yesterday. Ontario's new maximum fee for payday loans kicks in today. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quick deal not likely in pension talks

Federal and provincial governments are trying to hash out a way to encourage Canadians to save more for retirement.

But getting the different levels of government to agree on how best to do that, and to hatch a plan without alienating the powerful financial-services sector, will likely take far more than the day and a half set aside for such matters in Whitehorse this week.

"This may not be an immediate crisis that we're facing in Canada, but it's one that is coming at us," Colin Hansen, British Columbia's finance minister, said in an interview.

The global financial crisis of the last two years has exposed the weaknesses of the country's pension system. Now there's a growing consensus that major reforms need to be made.

In Whitehorse, Hansen wants to see all provinces and Ottawa recognize that reforms are necessary. But he also wants to see a timeline for discussions and, if possible, an agreement that the Canada Pension Plan should serve as the cornerstone of reforms.

Ottawa, however, is trying to lower expectations. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pensions declining

- Recent studies have shown that almost two-thirds of working Canadians have no workplace pension plan. And almost one-third of Canadian families have no retirement savings whatsoever. Plus, the percentage of Canadians covered by defined benefit pension plans has declined rapidly.

Safety **Check your head**

PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Test technician Patrick Richard displays a ski helmet tested at the Canadian Standards Association International Laboratory in Montreal in this April 2009 file photo. According to Safe Kids, international data show head injuries account for between three and 15 per cent of injuries to skiers and snowboarders, but make up 87 per cent of deaths. Victims of head injuries sustained while taking part in winter sports, as well as their families, are lobbying to make helmets mandatory.

Senate wants feds to tighten up Northwest Passage control

TRANSPORT The Senate wants the government to beef up control of the Northwest Passage by monitoring small vessels sailing its waters and ensuring the Coast Guard's Arctic ships have the necessary muscle to enforce Canadian law.

"There's not enough being done here," said Sen. Bill Rompkey, chairman of the committee that delivered its final report yesterday. "Time is running out.

"If you think security is expensive, try chaos."

Rompkey's committee has been travelling the Arctic for months to make recommendations on the role of the Coast Guard in waters rapidly becoming more accessible as sea ice disappears. The report echoed an interim document released last spring. But it expressed alarm at how quickly the North is changing, and how slowly Tory promises for the region are being fulfilled. THE CANADIAN PRESS

News in brief

DEATH The frozen body of a Nunavut woman who didn't return from walking her three dogs has been found. The RCMP in Iqaluit say Lindsay Hudson's body was found on a road outside the territorial capital Saturday afternoon. Hudson left her apartment Friday at noon and the RCMP were called by her roommate when she didn't return .

POWER Alberta's energy minister says the province is open for business for nuclear power plants. Mel Knight says the province will look at proposed nuclear plants on a case-by-case basis, but it will not help fund them or promise to buy the energy. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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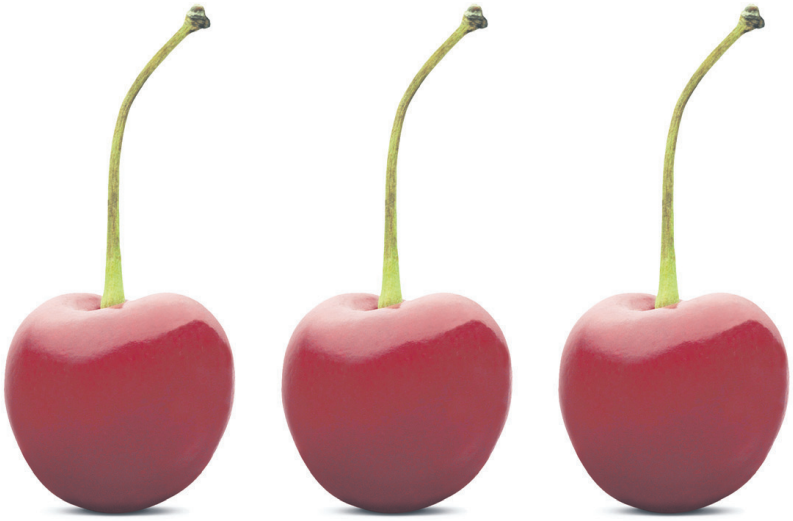

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Arson suspected in fire at 143-year-old church

Fire authorities suspect a blaze yesterday that caused heavy damage to the 143-year-old All Saints' Anglican Church in Whitby, Ont., may have been set deliberately. It is feared the fire also destroyed 90 Christmas packages assembled for families in need. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Senators OK travel perks

Senators have quietly given themselves the opportunity to jet around the globe, courtesy of Canadian taxpayers.

A new policy, adopted last May, gives denizens of the upper chamber international travel privileges not enjoyed by their elected counterparts in the House of Commons.

It enabled Liberal Senator Lillian Dyck, for instance, to go on a visit to her late father's ancestral home in China last month.

By senators' own admission, few politicians anywhere in the world are entitled to such a perk.

Details of the policy change are contained in transcripts of meetings of the Senate's bipartisan internal economy committee, which governs the upper chamber's operations. The transcripts are posted publicly on the Senate's website.

They offer a fascinating and often surprisingly frank glimpse of senators' perception of their entitlements and their awareness of the potential for a public backlash.

During one meeting, Liberal Senator Paul Massicote railed against the fact that some senators habitually fly business on the public's dime.

Nevertheless, it was Massicote, along with Conservative Senator Nancy Ruth, who recommended the policy change to allow some international travel.

Individual flights to international destinations other than Washington had been prohibited, but now senators may apply for approval to travel anywhere in the world.

The new policy was unanimously approved by Liberals and Conservatives on the committee.

Those who do get permission to go abroad must table public reports on their travels in the Senate.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Costa Rica **Canadian welcome**

KENT GILBERT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gov. Gen. Michaëlle Jean, along with Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, left, and Jean's husband, Jean-Daniel Lafond, was greeted by children yesterday during her visit to San Jose.

News in brief

HEALTH A study of Jewish women in Ontario has found that about one per cent carry a genetic mutation that dramatically raises their risk of breast and ovarian cancer, yet more than half of those identified would be ineligible for DNA testing under provincial guidelines. THE CANADIAN PRESS

MacKay admits failure to track Afghan detainees 'demoralizing'

AFGHANISTAN Defence Minister Peter MacKay says he understands if Canadian soldiers are demoralized by revelations that some Taliban insurgents they captured and handed over to Afghan police are unaccounted for.

MacKay says the failure to properly keep track of detainees speaks to the need to continue working with the Afghan government to improve its justice system.

The minister, in Halifax for a funding announcement, says it's "inevitably demoralizing" to learn that insurgents captured for planting explosive devices or attacking civilians and soldiers have been let go, with no record of what happened to them.

However, MacKay says he's received reports from Canadian commanders that show there have been substantial improvements within the prison system in recent months.

Also yesterday, MacKay rejected a report that Canada defended a former governor of Kandahar who was accused of torturing Afghans. MacKay was responding to allegations Asadullah Khalid might have been removed from office in 2006 if Canadian officials hadn't defended him for two more years. The assertion was in a report by diplomat Richard Colvin. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Edmontonians' electricity restored

DEEP FREEZE Hundreds of Edmontonians had power restored yesterday morning, after an underground cable ruptured on another record-breaking night for cold temperatures. Roughly 250 customers between 10 and 34 Avenues and 66 and 91 Streets were without power between 7 p.m. Sunday and 7 a.m. yesterday. "It was obviously an awful experience for our customers and it's just awful being without power when the weather is so bad," said Epcor's Mike Gibbs. VICTORIA HANDYSIDES/ METRO CANADA

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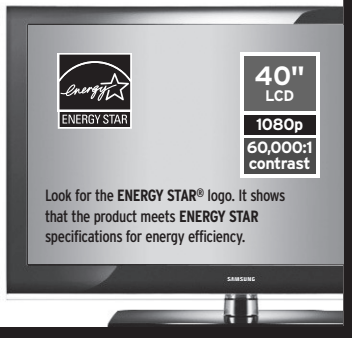

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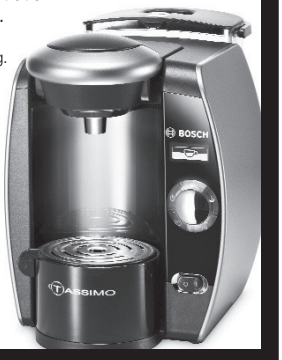

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Child deaths from falling televisions increasing

The number of children being killed or injured by falling TV sets is increasing, even at a time when people are replacing clunky older models with lighter flat-screens, a new study says. One possible explanation: After families buy flat screens, they relegate a heavy TV set to unsafe furniture in other rooms, tempting children in unsupervised settings. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

World

Maybe that's why they like bamboo

Genome mapping showing that pandas may prefer a bamboo-based diet because they can't taste meat could unlock secrets to ensuring the survival of the endangered species. The findings published in Nature magazine come from a study led by the Beijing Genomics Institute's branch in Shenzhen. Mutations in certain sequences of the giant panda's taste gene, which can affect the ability to experience savoury flavours such as meat and other high-protein foods, may have turned them onto a strict bamboo diet, the study said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nations end boycott

Developing countries walked out of UN emissions talks

Go Green

Poor countries ended a boycott of UN climate talks yesterday after getting assurances that rich nations were not conspiring to soften their commitments to cutting greenhouse gases, European officials said.

European Union environment spokesman Andreas Carlgren said informal talks resolved the impasse, which was started by African countries and backed by major developing countries, including China and India.

Rich and poor countries "found a reasonable solution," he said.

Developing countries agreed to return to all working groups that they abandoned earlier in the day at the 192-nation conference, said Anders Frandsen, a spokesman for conference president Connie Hedegaard.

The boycott had disrupted efforts to forge a pact on global warming and forced the cancellation of formal working groups, delaying the frantic work of negotiators trying to resolve technical issues before the arrival of more than 110 world leaders, including U.S. President Barack Obama, later this week.

Ice-free in 5 years?

- New computer modelling suggests the Arctic Ocean may be nearly ice-free in the summertime as early as 2014, former U.S. vice-president Al Gore said yesterday at the UN climate conference.

The move was largely seen as a ploy to shift the agenda to the responsibilities of the industrial countries and make emissions reductions the first item set for discussion today.

"We are really prepared to discuss all issues in the negotiations. It means also absolutely all issues under the Kyoto Protocol," Carlgren said.

The developing countries want to extend the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which imposed penalties on rich nations if they did not comply with its strict emissions limits but made no such binding demands on developing nations.

Poor countries, supported by China, said Hedegaard had raised suspicion that the conference was likely to kill the Kyoto Protocol.

The United States withdrew from Kyoto over concerns that it would harm the U.S. economy and that China, India and other major greenhouse gas emitters were not required to take action. China is now the world's largest greenhouse gas polluter.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PETER DEJONG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A person dressed as Death, mounted on horseback and holding a scythe, rides outside parliament in Copenhagen yesterday. During the Greenpeace protest, four people on horses represented the impact of climate change.

Women drowned, not raped and killed: Police

KASHMIR An Indian police agency investigating the deaths of two women in Kashmir said yesterday they drowned and were not raped and killed as alleged by locals, a ruling likely to further fuel anti-India sentiment.

The deaths of 22-year-old Neelofar Jan and her 17-year-old sister-in-law Asiya Jan in May ignited violent protests in the Himalayan region, where militant groups have fought Indian forces for independence or a union with Pakistan since 1989.

More than 68,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed in the uprising and subsequent Indian crackdown. The two women disappeared as they walked home from their family's apple orchard in Shopian, a town 60 kilometres south of Indian Kashmir's main city Srinagar.

Local authorities first said the women drowned when they found their bodies one kilometre apart along a shallow stream on May 30, but police later said the two had been raped and killed.

Four police officers were later arrested on charges of suppressing and destroying evidence in the case. The officers were freed in September, further stoking residents' anger.

"It's a case of drowning," Anil Bhan from the Central Bureau of Investigation told reporters in Srinagar.

He said the agency charged 13 people "for fabricating evidence and intimidating witnesses" to lead to the conclusion that the women were raped and killed. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Argentina **Student protest**

ROLANDO ANDRADE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A student throws a stone toward police to protest the re-election of the Buenos Aires University dean outside Congress in Buenos Aires, yesterday. Students consider the election illegal, claiming that the council that elects the dean lacks sufficient student representation.

Tag Heuer to stick with Tiger?

BUSINESS Swiss watch maker Tag Heuer said it will spend the next few weeks assessing its relationship with golfer Tiger Woods.

The statement from the company yesterday marked a less enthusiastic stance about Woods — who endorses the company's watches — than earlier in the day, when a spokeswoman said the company would continue with Woods. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

ITALY Premier Silvio Berlusconi is in pain and will remain hospitalized until at least today with a fractured nose and two broken teeth from an attack by a mentally disturbed man who hit him in the face with a statuette, doctors and aides said. The 73-year-old Berlusconi was rushed to the San Raffaele hospital in Milan with his face covered in blood after the attack Sunday. The attacker, a 42-year-old man with a history of psychological problems, has been arrested. After a night of questioning at a police barracks, the man was moved to the San Vittore prison in Milan, the ANSA news agency said. Police have identified him as Massimo Tartaglia.

PHILIPPINES Authorities moved thousands of villagers from harm's way near the Philippines' most active volcano yesterday after it oozed lava and shot plumes of ash, and said they probably will spend a bleak Christmas in an evacuation centre. State volcanologists raised the alert level on the cone-shaped, 2,460-metre Mayon volcano overnight to two steps below eruption after ash explosions and dark orange lava fragments glowing in the dark trickled down the mountain slope. Nearly 50,000 people live in an eight-kilometre radius around the mountain, and authorities began moving thousands of them in case it erupts, Albay provincial Gov. Joey Salceda said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Sully auctions off hat
Capt. Chesley (Sully) Sullenberger has auctioned one of his pilot's caps for $5,800 US and will donate the proceeds to three San Francisco Bay area public schools. The signed hat — which was not worn the day Sullenberger safely landed a disabled jet into New York's Hudson River — drew 68 bids on eBay. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Obama challenges U.S. banks

U.S. President Barack Obama challenged top bankers yesterday to explore "every responsible way" to increase lending, saying they were obliged to help after being rescued by taxpayers.

In a statement after more than an hourlong meeting with the executives, Obama said he reminded them that much of the financial crisis that took the U.S. banking system to the brink of collapse had been "of their own making."

He also exhorted the executives — both in private and in public — to drop their opposition to an overhaul of the nation's financial industry.

"If they wish to fight common sense consumer protections, that's a fight I'm more than willing to have," Obama told reporters at the White House.

He also urged lenders to find creative ways to free up lending. Obama said banks have benefited from bailouts and should use that strength to lend more money to consumer and businesses.

"But given the difficulty businesspeople are having as lending has declined, and given the exceptional assistance banks received to get them through a difficult time," he said, "we expect them to explore every responsible way to help get our economy moving again."

Delay, he said, was not an option he was willing to consider as his administration has focused on digging out an economy that has left more than 15 million Americans out of work. Many Americans resent the help the government gave to wealthy bankers while seeming to ignore their difficulties.

Bank of America chief executive Kenneth Lewis pledged to Obama that his bank would lend $5 billion US more to small- and mid-sized businesses in 2010 than it did in 2009. The bank said the move is part of a broader effort to support an economic recovery.

JPMorgan said last month that it would boost such lending by $4 billion US.

Obama's stern lecture came hours after Citigroup Inc. said that it was repaying $20 billion US in bailout money it received from the U.S. Treasury Department, in an effort to reduce government influence over the banking giant. The government will also sell its stake in the company.

The New York-based bank was among the hardest hit by the credit crisis and rising loan defaults and got one of the largest bailouts of any banks. Wells Fargo&Co. remains the last national bank that has yet to pay back its bailout money. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Given the exceptional assistance banks received to get them through a difficult time, we expect them to explore every responsible way to help get our economy moving again."
U.S. President Barack Obama

Plea deals made in penis gluing

WISCONSIN Two women accused of seeking revenge on a cheating lover by gluing his penis to his stomach have reached plea deals.

Therese Ziemann pleaded no contest yesterday to charges of disorderly conduct and misdemeanour battery. Her sister, Michelle Belliveau, pleaded no contest to disorderly conduct. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Crisis worsening in Sudan: Medical group

AFRICA At least 2,000 people have died and 250,000 have fled their homes following violence in southern Sudan this year, worsening a humanitarian crisis in a region seeking its independence, officials from a medical aid group said yesterday.

2,000
Estimated number of people killed by violence this year in southern Sudan.

Officials from Médecins Sans Frontières, or Doctors Without Borders, said this year's violence is the worst since the signing of a 2005 peace deal between south Sudan and the north, an agreement that ended two decades of civil war.

The group's operations director in Sudan, Stephan Goetghebuer, said the 2009 killings are different from past violence in the south that was linked to land clashes and cattle rustling. This year, villages have been attacked, and raiders have targeted and killed women and children, he said.

The group said that 87 per cent of the people it treated this year were victims of gunshot wounds, but that the number of people killed in the violence is three times higher than the number of wounded.

"There are very few survivors. People are killed massively," Goetghebuer said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

FIJI Three Fijians are dead, several people are missing and thousands are homeless after a tropical cyclone battered the South Pacific nation yesterday, causing flooding, damaging homes and trees, and disrupting power supplies, officials said. Cyclone Mick, Fiji's first this season, ripped through the island of Viti Levu. Mick struck up to six hours earlier than expected, catching many people unprepared, said Tim Sutton of UNICEF. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

British Airways crew to go on strike over the holidays

British Airways cabin crew will strike over Christmas, their union said yesterday, throwing travellers' holiday plans into uncertainty. Len McCluskey of the U.K.'s Unite union said 92.5 per cent of workers voted for the strike, to run Dec. 22 to Jan. 2. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Greeks warned of austerity measures

PM says country is in 'critical condition'

Greece's prime minister announced a barrage of spending cuts yesterday, promising to control a ballooning government budget deficit and warning that the country risked drowning in debt.

George Papandreou called for unity during a speech to business and union leaders in Athens. He pledged that his new Socialist government, elected in October, would take steps over the next few months that are decades overdue.

"Greece, with so much potential, is in critical condition," he said.

The raft of measures includes a reduction in defence spending in 2011 and 2012, slashing bonuses across the public sector, reducing social security and government operating expenditure by 10 per cent each and capping salaries of public utility directors.

He also called for taxes of up to 90 per cent on large bonuses for private bankers, the closure of a third of Greece's tourist offices abroad, and eliminating cost-of-living increases for some public sector workers.

"Our slogan of 'Either we change or we sink' is more pertinent than ever."
Prime Minister George Papandreou

A capital gains tax is to be introduced, and inheritance and property taxes abolished by the previous government would be restored.

Many measures would be painful, Papandreou acknowledged, but he promised protection for the weaker sectors of society.

Greece has been facing its worst debt crisis in decades amid global recession. It faces political pressure from the European Union to straighten out its finances and obey deficit limits intended to support the shared euro currency.

"Greece faces the risk of sinking under its debt," Papandreou said, adding that the country "has lost every trace of credibility" and that financial markets want to see action. "Our slogan of 'Either we change or we sink' is more pertinent than ever," he stressed.

Greece is not the only country in the eurozone facing debt problems. Ireland, Spain and Portugal all are suffering from extra scrutiny in bond markets.

Papandreou pledged that Greece's debt, a staggering $465 billion, will begin to be reduced by 2012 at the latest. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

France **Forward-thinking gesture**

CHRISTOPHE ENA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

French President Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled details yesterday of a proposed $54-billion government spending program aimed at universities and the development of green technology.

'Suspicious' Americans to be tried in Iran

STANDOFF Iran said yesterday it will try three Americans who wandered across the border from Iraq last July and became ensnared in a bitter standoff with the West over Tehran's nuclear program. Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki did not say when the trial would begin or what the Americans were charged with, other than that they had "suspicious aims." They were earlier accused of spying. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

JEWEL The 31.06-carat Wittelsbach-Graff Diamond, out of view for a half-century, will go on display in January at the Smithsonian in Washington.

JAILBIRDS A North Carolina court blocked the release of two convicted murderers sentenced under a 1970s law that limited life terms. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'High-value' terror suspect could face civilian trial

GUANTANAMO U.S. prosecutors are considering sending a Guantanamo detainee named Majid Khan to New York to face a federal civilian trial, a source said yesterday.

Khan is one of fewer than 20 detainees at the detention centre labelled high-value by the U.S. government, meaning he is thought to be a senior member of al-Qaida, or someone with extensive knowledge of the terror network.

A legal U.S. resident, Khan lived in Baltimore before moving to Pakistan. Counterterrorism officials say he eventually met reputed Sept. 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The Justice Department is weighing whether to put him on trial in federal court in New York City, but no final decision has been made, according to a person speaking on condition of anonymity. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

More funds pledged to ward off Asian carp

U.S. officials say they'll use $13 million in Great Lakes restoration funds for efforts to prevent invasive Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HATEM MOUSSA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tens of thousands of supporters attended a rally yesterday in Gaza, marking the 22nd anniversary of Hamas. The militant group was founded in 1987 during the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

Thousands back fiery Hamas leader at rally

Hamas mobilized tens of thousands of supporters yesterday for an anniversary rally meant to show the militant Islamic organization still has support despite Israel's devastating military assault on Gaza last year.

The crowd responded with chants of "We won't recognize Israel" to a fiery speech by Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, who said the movement scored a "divine victory" against the Jewish state and will not lay down its arms.

Despite the defiant words, Hamas has sharply curtailed rocket fire on Israeli border towns since last winter's Israeli offensive, which inflicted heavy losses on the militants.

"Brothers and sisters, we will not be satisfied with Gaza."
PM Ismail Haniyeh

And, in a departure from last year's rally, Hamas did not taunt Israel over the soldier it is holding captive, Sgt. Gilad Schalit, whom the militants hope to trade for hundreds of Palestinians held by Israel. It appears Hamas didn't want to jeopardize the prospects of a German-mediated prisoner swap.

Hamas was founded in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising against Israel. It seized Gaza from Western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in 2007 and has since tightened its control despite a crippling border blockade by Israel and Egypt.

Haniyeh struck a hard line, saying Hamas would not recognize Israel or call off armed struggle "until the Palestinian people achieve freedom and independence."

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "we will not be satisfied with Gaza. Hamas looks toward the whole of Palestine."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arkansas court approves secular holiday display

CRÈCHE TEST A secular display celebrating the winter solstice and "freethinkers" such as Albert Einstein and Bill Gates can be placed at the Arkansas state capitol alongside a Christmas nativity scene, a federal judge said yesterday.

The Arkansas Society of Freethinkers sued last week after Secretary of State Charlie Daniels rejected its proposal, saying it wasn't consistent with the capitol's decorations and displays. The group asked for a quick hearing before the winter solstice on Dec. 21.

U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright granted an injunction yesterday allowing the display to go up.

The group never wanted to remove the nativity display, said Tod Billings, president of the Freethinkers. He said he hoped the display would go up tomorrow and remain in place until the nativity scene is removed after the holidays.

"We just wanted the freedom to be included in the holiday celebrations publicly, just like anybody else can do if they fill out the appropriate paperwork," said Billings.

The society proposed a 2.4-metre-high plywood display that would detail the history of the solstice. It would also include photos of people it considers "freethinkers," such as Einstein, Gates and Eleanor Roosevelt.

"As the old year passes and a new year is born, we reflect on that which has passed and hope for a better tomorrow," the proposed display reads. "May the light of reason be a beacon to a brighter future for us all." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. presses China to release activist

SILENCED The U.S. has urged China to release a high-profile dissident who called for political change. It is also pushing Beijing to allow all activists to petition their government. State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said yesterday the U.S. is worried that Liu Xiaobo and other Chinese citizens may have been detained or harassed because they signed a charter demanding democratic change and respect for human rights. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

News in brief

NUCLEAR TALKS An upcoming meeting by five world powers on curbing Iran's nuclear program has been cancelled at China's request, senior officials from three of the countries said yesterday. One official cited scheduling conflicts. The five now plan to talk by phone on Dec. 22. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Comment

What's MacKay's future?

NationalReport

In the Afghan detainee controversy, Peter MacKay's stonewalling and roughhouse takedown of a diplomat was characteristic of this government whenever it is accused of anything. Did the defence minister have any choice but to respond in the way he did?

If, in fact, he had a free hand and chose the stealth route, then yes, MacKay should resign. If his line of defence was dictated from above, then it becomes a tougher call. As he made clear yesterday, he will not step down. But in the rumoured cabinet shuffle, he should be moved out of defence.

MacKay is one of several holders of big portfolios who has stumbled. He is part of a starless cabinet, an unlit galaxy except for the one and only, the prime minister himself.

Environment Minister Jim Prentice has been beaten up for his inactivity on global warming, inactivity that sees this country collecting fossil-of-the-year awards. But has the foot-dragging been his doing? Apparently, it's the PM who has prevented him from taking swifter action. Before environment, Prentice held the thankless Indian affairs portfolio, where his main task was to ditch the Kelowna accord. Considered a future leadership contender, he has hardly been able to burnish his credentials.

Peter MacKay

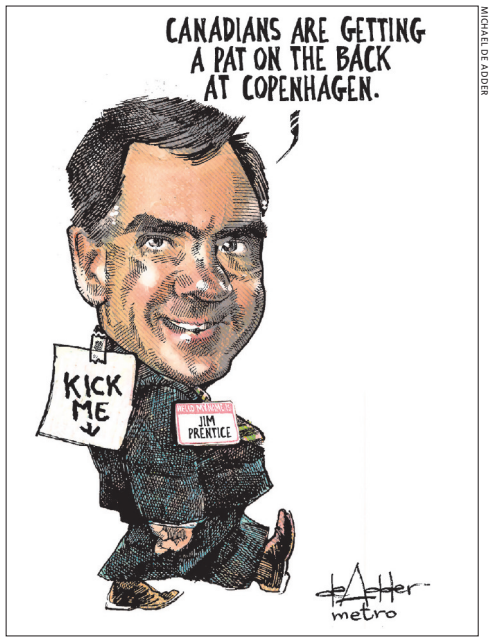
Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has had a better year than ones previous. But he has been dragging around a lot of chains — the income trust flip-flop, the disastrous fiscal update of last year and his repeated underestimating of the federal deficit. Again the question needs to be asked — how many of the calls were his own?

The prime minister has some breathing room on the political calendar and could move one, all or none of the above. Strong performers like Immigration Minister Jason Kenney and Trade Minister Stockwell Day could be promoted. Long-serving Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, who is to the right of Sarah Palin, could be moved as well as Transport Minister John Baird, the Commons court jester who specializes in drubbing opponents. Taking him on is like arguing with a brass band.

One likely move will see Maxime Bernier, the former foreign minister who resigned after getting caught up in the biker-girl, lost-documents scandal, brought back to cabinet because he is popular in Quebec.

But no one is too excited about any pending changes. Usually, cabinet shuffles are a big deal. Not in Harperland. In his cabinets no one gets to be a heavyweight. They all bob around, waiting for the word from on high.

Lawrence Martin is a journalist and author of 10 books who writes about national affairs from Ottawa.



MICHAEL DE ADDER

Views

Afghan detainees: A moral dilemma

InStep

After the recent bout of public scrutiny over accusations by former senior Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin about Ottawa's indifference toward the torture of detainees in Afghanistan, we need to recall that, in 2005, former prime minister Paul Martin gave the thumbs up to then-defence minister Bill Graham to negotiate a detainee transfer agreement with the Afghanistan government.

At the root of this ongoing dilemma of how to process these detainees is our high regard for human rights: The golden element that keeps a robust flock of immigrants and refugees coming our way. Human rights is the cornerstone of our democracy. For this reason, we hold our authorities to a higher moral standard, having delegated ourselves the responsibility of being international role models, but we need to do so with understanding.

For instance, most of us can not fathom the routine atrocities committed by many foreign regimes such as the Taliban, such as: Shooting eight boys to death because they laughed at Taliban fighters, mutilations, beatings, gang rapes and the torture of women and children; burning entire families alive. More frightening is that these atrocities represent the vision these barbaric insurgents hope to export to other parts of the world, with their deep-seated hatred and opposition to Western values.

Based on these facts, we need to appreciate that justice would be better served if groups like Amnesty International would up the ante in renouncing the heinous deeds of an enemy that has gone so far as to hide among civilians and disguise its members as emergency and media personnel.

These unlawful combatants are not protected by the Geneva Conventions, even though there are those who argue they should be. And they most certainly do not fall under our Charter of Rights of Freedoms. However, Justice Anne McTavish did rule that Afghan detainees do have rights under their own constitution and international law.

Given the prior floods of accusations about the Western lack of respect for the sovereignty of foreign governments, how do we justify bypassing Afghanistan's own rules of engagement, albeit primitive? According to Brig.-Gen. Daniel Menard, progress is happening as Afghan authorities are being receptive to Canada's advice on how to treat detainees.

We need to exercise patience and support of ongoing efforts to work out a moral solution concerning these detainees.

Christine Williams is the producer and host of the live current affairs daily talk show On the Line at CTS TV in Burlington, Ont.

Worth mentioning

Tunes that get you in holiday shopping mood

For many holiday shoppers, the only thing worse than the crowds and endless lineups is the Christmas music.

But next time you roll your eyes at yet another mall rendition of Jingle Bell Rock, think of Kym de la Roche. She's been listening to Christmas music since about August.

As a member of Holt Renfrew's creative department in Toronto, de la Roche is responsible for compiling the store's Christmas playlist. Compiling a good Christmas playlist isn't easy, either — not only do good holiday songs come in short supply, de la Roche must also ensure that every tune falls "in line with the Holt Renfrew DNA."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Top 10 songs

Here are Kym de la Roche's picks this year for the 10 best Christmas songs to shop to:

1 The Ventures — Sleigh Ride
2 Badly Drawn Boy — Donna & Blitzen
3 Band Aid — Do They Know It's Christmas?
4 Eartha Kitt — Santa Baby
5 The Dandy Warhols — Little Drummer Boy
6 Matt Dusk — Cool Yule
7 Otis Redding — Merry Christmas Baby
8 Any song on A Charlie Brown Christmas by Vince Guaraldi Trio
9 Martha Wainwright — Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
10 Edith Piaf — Le Noel de la Rue

We Know What You're Thinking

45% The percentage of Canadians who say the festive season is the most stressful time of year.

IPSOS REID

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Letters must include sender's full name, address and phone number – street name and phone numbers will NOT be published. We reserve the right to edit letters.

RBC Dominion advisers allegedly aided tax evasion
Canada Revenue Agency alleges investment advisers at a branch of RBC Dominion Securities Inc. helped clients set up offshore accounts that were used to evade taxes, CBC News Online reports. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Business

DOLLAR	GAS	OIL	TSX
US 94.40¢	US $5.249	US $69.51	11,545.69
US 0.05¢	US 8.6¢	US $0.36	121.76

EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA

Deeper in debt

Report shows Canadians owe more than ever before

The latest report on household debt from Statistics Canada carries a sober message: Collectively, Canadians are deeper in debt than ever before.

But economists say that record-low interest rates mean that debt loads are still manageable and will likely improve as the economy begins to recover from the depths of the recession.

The StatsCan report, released yesterday, comes on the heels of a stern warning about rising debt issued last week by the Bank of Canada.

Surging stock markets pushed up Canadians' net worth in the third quarter, StatsCan said in its report. Canada's premier stock market, the S&P/TSX Composite Index rose 9.8 per cent in the third quarter. That's on top of a 19 per cent gain in the previous three months.

Household net worth, the value of families' assets such as cars, homes, savings accounts and investments, minus what they owe, reached $5.72 trillion at the end of September, StatsCan said.

But household debt, mainly mortgages and consumer credit, also went up. It rose from July to September as Canadians rushed to take advantage of low interest rates to buy cars, homes, renovate and shop. Personal sector liabilities rose to $1.41 trillion, up 1.6 per cent.

"Falling mortgage rates, along with increased sales of existing homes and renovations, sustained increases in mortgage demand," StatsCan said. "Strength in auto purchases led to a further increase in consumer credit."

The result is a record debt-to-income ratio of 145 per cent, the agency said. That means for every $100 of income, Canadians owe $145.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

National worth

- Canada's national net worth, which includes business and government assets and liabilities, fell 1.3 per cent to $5.89 trillion as governments and consumers took on more debt, the report said.

Toyota Meet the new Prius

KOJI SASAHARA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Toyota Motor Corp. executive vice-president Takeshi Uchiyamada demonstrates during a photo session of its Prius Plug-in Hybrid in Tokyo, yesterday. Toyota showed its new plug-in hybrid, packed with a more powerful battery called lithium-ion that's different from those used in Prius hybrids on roads today, available for leasing this month in Japan, the U.S. and Europe.

m.metronews.ca

ScanLife

Abu Dhabi keeps Dubai afloat with a $10-billion injection to help its neighbour cover debt payments. Scan this barcode for the full article.

In brief

PHONE New wireless phone company Wind Mobile has partnered with movie and game rental chain Blockbuster Canada and will soon begin sales from outlets in Toronto and Calgary. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Higher interest rates coming: RBC

MONEY The Royal Bank says Canadians can expect to be hit by higher interest rates in the second half of next year and in 2011.

Royal Bank economists say the Bank of Canada will be among the next group of central banks to move off floor-low rates, with the Canadian bank's overnight rate finishing 2010 at 1.25 per cent.

And RBC economists say they believe the trend-setting rate could rise to as much as 3.5 per cent in 2011.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

GDP

- A new forecast by RBC Economics predicts real gross domestic product to rise by 2.6 per cent next year and 3.9 per cent in 2011.

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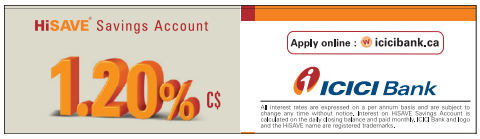
Your Money

EDITOR: FERMIN.DESOUZA@METRONEWS.CA



RRSP season looming

Investing

Allan Small

metronews.ca/investing

What should investors think this RRSP season?

If interest rates rise next year, anyone with loans tied to the prime rate (variable loans) will see higher interest rate charges.

Regarding investments themselves, anyone who is in a fixed rate security like a bond, could see the price of that security fall. Bond funds or other managed products that invest in fixed income securities could see prices fall. Please remember for those that own individual fixed income securities like individual government or corporate bonds, your pricing will be affected as well but if you own these products to maturity, you will get your original investment back (face value).

A slow interest rate increase should not influence fixed income products too much at first. The environment for this year will still be great for individual investors to grow their portfolios.

Allan Small can be reached at asmall@dundeesecurities.com The views expressed are not necessarily those of Dundee Securities

Most memorable gifts

AlisonOnMoney

Alison Griffiths

metronews.ca/alisononmoney

A few days ago I was thinking about the most memorable gifts I've ever received. Interestingly, there wasn't a purchased one on the list. Here are some of my top picks to give you a few ideas as the final countdown to Christmas begins.

A few days after my husband and I lost a beloved dog, a friend dropped off a gift basket for us which cheered us up immeasurably.

She's a single working parent with two young boys so money isn't exactly plentiful. But everything was perfect. There were hand picked flowers, several jars of jam made by one of her boys and some biscuits for our other dog. It brought tears to our eyes.

My sister works in theatre — not exactly the richest field — so she paints lovely cards which I use year round and I always receive the nicest comments when I send them out.

A dear friend gave me homemade body scrub last year smelling wonderfully of honey and lavender. She's a busy woman with a television career and I appreciate the time she spent in her kitchen making my gift.

My husband's late godfather specialized in making electrical fixtures out of found items. Every Christmas he gave us a whimsical lamp which cost him nothing but time.

When my husband was an impoverished college student he made me a sand cast candle in the colours of the season with cute decorations imbedded in it. No diamond ring could have won my heart more quickly than his slightly tilted, red wax tower.

Note to guys: Forget the mall. Make something for your best beloved and she will swoon with surprise and delight.

The secret to thoughtful but inexpensive presents is putting a little effort into the conception and execution of the gift. The ads are screaming 10 shopping days left until Christmas! Consider instead 10 thinking and doing days left until Christmas.

Alison Griffiths is a financial journalist, author and host of Maxed Out on the W Network. Write to her at alison@alisongriffiths.ca.

Alison's Money Rule:

- With gifts, the thought really does count. Dip into your time instead of your wallet and the results will be inexpensive and memorable.

Tips for philanthropic Canadians

MoneyMatters

Henry Choo Chong

metronews.ca/moneymatters

Q I would like to make a donation but also maximize my tax situation. Do I have to make my donation before the end of the year or can I contribute before Feb. 28, 2010? Are there any limits to my gift?
— Randy

A For a 2009 tax deduction, charitable donations must be made before the end of the year. A 15 per cent tax credit is allowed on the first $200 with amounts over $200 at 29 per cent tax rate. Partners should combine their donation and utilize the five-year carry-forward period to maximize the deduction. Annual deductions are limited to 75 per cent of net income with excess amounts carried forward.

Nicola Elkins, CEO and founder of Benefaction Foundation and author of Master your Philanthropy, has some tips for philanthropic Canadians:

- Make gifts of securities instead of cash. Receive a tax credit for donation and pay no capital gains tax.
- Limit tax for estate by gifting your RRSP or RRIF. Naming a charity as beneficiary for your RRSP or RRIF can eliminate tax.
- Executives should consider donating optioned stock. Like public securities, donated portion may incur no capital gain tax.

Henry Choo Chong, CGA, can be reached at choochonghcga@yahoo.ca.

'Tis the season for resolutions

The holiday season can be wonderful, but also financially stressful. According to Jeffrey F. Schwartz, executive director of Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada, more Canadians every year start off January with a massive debt on their shoulders.

"According to current research by financial institutions, almost half a million Canadians are behind on credit card payments by 90 days or more. That's three months worth of interest charges that are snowballing," said Schwartz.

He notes that if you don't deal with your holiday debt at the start of the year, the situation can get out of control.

"Almost half a million Canadians are behind on credit card payments by 90 days or more."
Jeffrey F. Schwartz

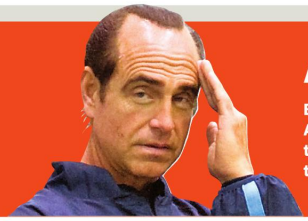
Schwartz has six suggestions for an action plan:

- Aim to pay down debt as soon as possible — paying interest is just giving money away.
- Sit down with your family and write out a budget.
- Total up the amount you owe on each credit card.
- Decide how you want to tackle your debt until balances are paid in full, whether it's better budgeting, household cutbacks or making extra income.
- Paying off the highest interest rate debt first. Move to other debt from there.
- Write down what you are spending. By keeping track of financial transactions, a pattern will appear and it becomes easier to pinpoint and stop bad habits.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Fitzgerald hurt
Arizona star receiver Larry Fitzgerald left the Cardinals game against the San Francisco 49ers with a sprained right knee. Fitzgerald was hurt on the third play of the third quarter last night when he tried to catch a deep pass from Kurt Warner. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sports



Argos dump coach

Bart Andrus has paid the price for a 3-15 season. The Toronto Argonauts have fired the first-year head coach after finishing as the worst team in the CFL. The 51-year-old Andrus was named the Argos' 40th head coach on Jan. 16. THE CANADIAN PRESS

EDITOR: DON.MCHOULL@METRONEWS.CA

Crease is crowded

Four goalies fight for two spots on Canadian junior squad

There was no question for team management who are the four best 19-and-under goaltenders in Canada, but a huge decision looms on who are the best two.

Jake Allen, Matt Hackett, Martin Jones and Olivier Roy are in a tight battle at the team selection camp for the two spots for goalies on the Canadian squad that will play at the world junior championship Dec. 26-Jan. 5 in Regina and Saskatoon.

Allen, of the Montreal Juniors, is the front-runner because of his greater national and international experience, but none of the other three can be counted out.

"They've been consistent throughout the year and, in such a short event, consistency is crucial," goaltending coach Ron Tugnutt said yesterday.

RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Martin Jones, from the Calgary Hitmen, makes a save during practice yesterday at the selection camp for the World Junior Ice Hockey Championships in Regina.

"This is going to be a fight to the end for these guys."

Roy, of the Cape Breton Screaming Eagles, is the shootout king. The six-foot-four Jones, of the Calgary Hitmen, has the widest wingspan. And Hackett, of the Plymouth Whalers, has the best regular season numbers among the four.

"We'll discuss them as a group," Tugnutt added. "We're in a good situation."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Halladay trade headlines busy day in major leagues

Baseball's hot stove started sizzling yesterday, with Roy Halladay, John Lackey, Hideki Matsui and Mike Cameron all set to switch teams.

The Phillies have a tentative agreement to acquire Halladay in a trade with Toronto, and the former Cy Young Award winner was in Philadelphia yesterday for a physical required to complete the deal. Philadelphia also was discussing a trade that would send Cliff Lee, another former Cy Young winner, to Seattle.

The retooling Red Sox made two key moves in one day, reaching tentative agreements on a five-year contract with pitcher John Lackey worth $80 million to $85 million US and a two-year deal with outfielder Mike Cameron for about $15 million.

World Series MVP Hideki Matsui decided to head west, reaching a preliminary agreement with the Los Angeles Angels on a one-year contract worth about $6.5 million.

Halladay has been coveted by top clubs for months, and the commissioner's office granted a 72-hour window on Sunday for Toronto and Philadelphia to complete their trade, a baseball official familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press yesterday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because Major League Baseball didn't make any announcement.

Philadelphia could give up pitchers J.A. Happ, Joe Blanton and outfielder Dominic Brown as part of a deal, the person said. Lee could wind up going to the Mariners, the baseball official said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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SCOREBOARD

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Canadian women aren't taking U.S. lightly

HOCKEY If momentum is swinging back in Canada's favour in its women's hockey rivalry with the United States, Canadian head coach Melody Davidson doesn't see it that way.

"I've been around this rivalry long enough to know that every day is a new day and both teams are so close," she said yesterday.

Canada was in a 2-6 slump versus the U.S., including losses in the last two world championship finals, after September's Hockey Canada Cup in Vancouver.

Since then, the Canadians have won four of their last five against the Americans heading into today's game at the Pengrowth Saddledome (TSN, 8 p.m.).

The game is the fourth of a six-game travelling exhibition series that both countries are using to prepare for the Winter Olympics starting Feb. 12 in Vancouver and Whistler, B.C.

According to Hockey Canada, about 8,000 tickets had been sold as of yesterday for the game at Saddledome, which seats 19,289.

The Canadians are coming off a 4-2 win over the U.S. on Saturday in Denver to improve to 3-0 in the series, but they are 1-3 against the Americans in international tournaments this winter.

The U.S. beat Canada twice at the Hockey Canada Cup in September. They split two games at the annual Four Nations Cup in November.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Sports in brief

CFL Scott Ackles stepped down as president of the Calgary Stampeders yesterday to become general manager of the 2011 Grey Cup in Vancouver. It will mark the third time Ackles has been given the task of organizing a CFL championship.

BASEBALL Baseball commissioner Bud Selig plans to establish a study group that will examine on-field issues that could include replay, umpires and pace of game. An announcement is expected today during a news conference.

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Pretty Woman signs on him beauty product line
Julia Roberts, who most famously played a sex-trade worker in the movie Pretty Woman, has been named ambassador for the beauty product line Lancôme. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Health & Beauty

EDITOR: JENNIFER.PRITTIE@METRONEWS.CA

Nothing says I love you like a billy goat

When asked what she wanted for Christmas, R&B singer Rihanna told a British television interviewer that she wants some "great food and great sex." The latter may be a little hard to wrap, but how about a gift that may just lead to some greatness in that department?

In his 25 years as a marriage and family therapist in Winnipeg, Dr. Todd Sellick says that the biggest problem couples face when it comes to sex is not knowing each other's fantasies or expectations. That's why he and his wife Jan developed A Private Affair: The Erotic Game of Secrets, Plans & Promises for Couples, a 500-card game that facilitates the sharing of sexual secrets, opinions, and requests among other things. $34.99 Available through aprivateaffairgame.com

If you discover that one of her fantasies is to have a nice, long romantic massage, invest in a set of bSwish Massage Candles. The scented candles come in Fig Wood, Amber and Rose Patchouli. The candles melt at low temperature are set in an elegantly stylish porcelain holder designed to let you pour the warm wax on to your hands or directly on to your honey for a soothing and sexy massage. $22 Available at comeasyouare.com.

Express your love for your partner by being selfless. OXFAM Canada has a number of ways you can help others from buying a chicken or a goat for someone in the developing world or by supporting home-based care workers who attend to people suffering from HIV and AIDS. $15 Chicken/$58 Goat/$150 AIDS/HIV home care. Available at oxfamunwrapped.ca

Finally, you don't need to spend a lot of money to come up with a romantic gift for your sweetie. Do what author Ellen Green did. She kept an ongoing list of every sweet, remarkable and unremarkable thing her husband did throughout the year and gave him the list every Valentine's Day.

She published the best of 20 years of lists in Remember the Sweet Things: One List, Two Lives, and Twenty Years of Marriage.

If you start now, you should have quite a list by next Christmas.

Josey Vogels is a sex and relationship columnist and author of five books on the subjects. For more info, visit joseyvogels.com.

PHOTOS.COM

A new study has shown that perscription pain killers were linked to more deaths than heroin.

Prescription pain killers

Opioid-related deaths double since 1991

CELIA MILNE
for Metro Canada

They kill pain but they also kill people. A new Canadian study has found that deaths from prescription pain medications are on the rise.

"More people will die from prescription painkillers in 2009 than from H1N1," Dr. Irfan Dhalla told Metro in an email.

Dhalla is lead author of the study and a clinician-scientist at the Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute of St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Dhalla and his colleagues examined trends in the prescribing of opioid painkillers in Ontario from 1991 to 2007. Common opioids include Oxycontin, Percocet, Percodan, Tylenol with codeine, Demerol, and morphine. These painkillers are often prescribed for acute pain, such as post-surgery pain or the pain associated with a broken bone. They may be used also for severe chronic pain, such as from some forms of cancer. Doctors are now also prescribing opioids for less-severe pain, such as chronic back pain.

When researchers studied data for all deaths from 1991 to 2004, they found that opioid-related deaths doubled in that period, from 13.7 per million in 1991 to 27.2 per million in 2004. Prescribing of oxycodone — the active ingredient in Oxycontin — has risen very rapidly. From 1999 to 2004, the number of deaths related to oxycodone rose fivefold, says Dhalla.

There are far more deaths in Ontario from prescription painkillers than from heroin or cocaine, noted the study.

When healthy eating becomes harmful living

CELIA MILNE
for Metro Canada

DIETING Healthy eating: Some people take it too far.

When people eliminate large numbers of foods in the name of health and then become obsessive-compulsive about food, this could signal they have a type of eating disorder.

Although "healthy eating disorder," or orthorexia nervosa as it is called, is not formally recognized as a mental illness, it does exist and is increasingly being noticed, says Colorado physician Steven Bratman, author of Health Food Junkies.

Orthorexia nervosa begins with a desire to avoid foods that are unhealthy, such as junk food. More and more foods end up on the "bad" list over time. Avoidance becomes fear and then sufferers develop an obsession with finding foods that won't make them sick.

They lose weight, and sometimes it is hard to find enough to eat in order to carry on normal activities in their day-to-day life.

If you have a friend who fits this scenario and suspect they may be in need of help you should suggest that they see their physician.

Soy, pistachios, hops potential shields against cancer

Together, it would be hard to imagine an appealing recipe for these three fixings: Soy, pistachios and hops.

But individually, the foodstuffs may hold ingredients that can help control a trio of the most common forms of cancer, according to three new studies released last week

In the most important of these, a major new paper published in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that soy could dramatically decrease the risk of tumour recurrence among breast cancer survivors.

"I would say that this study would indicate that women with breast cancer should (eat) soy products," says Dr. Xiao Ou Shu, an epidemiologist at Nashville's Vanderbilt University Medical Centre who authored the study. "I think that it shows there is protection there."

The research, which looked at more than 5,000 breast cancer patients in China, showed a 32 per cent reduction in recurrence of the disease in women who consumed significant amounts of soy.

Meanwhile, papers being presented at the American Association of Cancer Research conference in Houston this week are extolling the virtues of pistachios and hops as potential cancer shields.

JENNIFER RAIN/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Two news studies are suggesting that pistachios can act as potential shields for cancer.

Pistachios contain high levels of gamma-tocopherol, a Vitamin E compound that has been shown to lower the risks of developing lung cancer, says Ladia Hernandez, a senior research dietician at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Hernandez says she was searching for foods that would be best at delivering gamma-tocopherol into the blood.

She found a daily intake of about 117 pistachios (about 57 grams) a day on top of a regular diet would produce elevated levels without a corresponding weight gain.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Food bank help
Loblaw is introducing a new "Extra Helping" logo to be placed in store aisles alongside the food items most needed by the local food bank, such as canned fish or meat, lentils and beans and hot/cold cereal. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Food

Pile up your cone

Cuisipro's newfangled Ice Cream Scoop & Stack creates stackable cylinders for cones as well as "elegant desserts," as the makers say. This is not a quick tool: You shove the scoop into a tub of ice cream, using a pull, twist, push and release sequence to create your cylinder. The results can be fun and colourful though. The Scoop & Stack retails for $19.99 at kitchen shops. It is dishwasher-safe and is available in a variety of colours. For the nearest store, call 1-866-306-3672 (toll-free). TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

EDITOR: ANN-MARIE.COLACINO@METRONEWS.CA

A casserole fit for a cowboy

Cowboy Casserole
SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 1/3 lb (600 g) unpeeled baking potatoes, scrubbed and thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 Tbsp (20 mL) olive oil
- 1 tsp (5 mL) tomato paste
- 14 oz (398 mL) can baked beans
- 1/4 lb (125 g) frozen peas
- 1/4 lb (125 g) frozen green beans
- 7 oz (200 g) can corn, drained
- 2 Tbsp (25 mL) barbecue sauce
- 3 1/2 oz (100 g) smoked cheese, roughly chopped

METHOD:
1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Put potatoes into pot of boiling water. Bring back to boil; half-cover and simmer until just tender, but not breaking up. Drain thoroughly, reserving 4 tbsp (60 mL) cooking water. Tip potatoes into bowl, add oil and toss to coat. Set aside.
2. Blend tomato paste with reserved hot water in pot. Tip in baked beans, peas, green beans, corn and barbecue sauce. Heat gently, stirring, until mixture is barely warm and peas and green beans have thawed. Tip into shallow casserole dish, spreading into even layer. Scatter over cubes of smoked cheese.
3. Arrange potato slices over top, overlapping slightly to completely cover bean and cheese mixture. Bake 30 minutes or until potatoes are tender and top is golden brown.

Clockwise from top: Cowboy casserole, salmon puffs with tzatziki and brie turkey pockets with cabbage and walnuts.

Salmon Puffs with Tzatziki
SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:
- 3/4 lb (375 g) pack pre-rolled puff pastry
- 5 1/3 oz (160 g) skinless salmon fillet, cut into 1/2-in. (1 cm) squares
- 1/4 lb (125 g) frozen fava beans
- 1 oz (30 g) fresh dill, chopped
- 1 oz (30 g) snipped fresh chives
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) ricotta cheese
- 1/2 cucumber
- 1 cup (250 mL) plain yogurt

METHOD:
1. Remove pastry from fridge. Preheat oven to 460°F (240°C). Put salmon squares in bowl and add frozen fava beans and herbs. Season and mix well.
2. Unroll pastry, then cut into four 7 x 3 1/3 -in. (17.5 x 8.5 cm) pieces. Brush egg lightly all over pastry. Mound salmon mixture in centres of pastry pieces. Place ricotta cheese on each mound of filling. Fold long ends of pastry up to meet over filling and pinch together at top. Press sides together to seal.
3. Transfer pastries to baking sheet and brush with egg. Bake until puffed and golden.
4. Meanwhile, grate cucumber into sieve and press out excess moisture over sink. Mix cucumber into yogurt. Transfer tzatziki to serving bowl and serve with hot salmon puffs.

Brie Turkey Pockets with Cabbage and Walnuts
SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 oz (30 g) fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 1 dessert apple, peeled, cored and grated
- 4 thick turkey breasts
- 5 oz (150 g) brie, cut into 4 wedges
- 3 Tbsp (45 mL) olive oil
- 1 lb (500 g) green cabbage, finely shredded
- 8 scallions, sliced
- 1 3/4 oz (50 g) walnuts, chopped

METHOD:
1. Preheat oven to 460°F (240°C). Mix ginger and apple. Cut horizontally through each turkey breast (not all the way through). Divide ginger and apple mixture among pockets, then push wedge of cheese into each. Press meat together into shape and push filling evenly in pockets.
2. Put pockets neatly in one layer in shallow ovenproof dish. Brush with 1 tbsp (15 mL) oil and sprinkle with seasoning to taste. Bake until turkey is browned on top and cooked through, and filling is running out in places.
3. Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in large pan and add cabbage, scallions and walnuts. Cook over medium heat, stirring, until cabbage is reduced in volume and lightly cooked. Add seasoning to taste. Transfer pockets to plates. Add some cabbage to each plate and serve.

rd.ca
For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out **Key Ingredients** in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!

Wine that goes well with "game"

BEVERAGE Talk about adding joy to your joystick. Canadian-born vintner Mike James has rolled his second love — video games — into 8-Bit Vintners (8bitvintners.com), a winery in Walla Walla, Wash., that recently launched its first vintage, appropriately dubbed Player 1. On the label, James bypasses pairing the wine with cheeses, desserts and grilled meats. Instead he recommends that Player 1 be enjoyed "while playing Mega Man 2 on the Nintendo Entertainment System or Shadow of the Colossus on PlayStation 2."

Oenophiles should note that the red table wine — which isn't yet available in Canada — is a blend of mainly Syrah and Tempranillo grapes from various vineyards throughout the Columbia Valley, Wahluke Slope and Walla Walla Valley. Gamers, meanwhile, should note that the Nintendo Entertainment System first hit the market in 1986 and definitely won't be available at Best Buy this holiday season.

Gaming systems, it seems, don't age as well as wines." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

LiquidAssets

Peter Rockwell
metronews.ca/liquidassets

Pour like Santa

Well here we are at the holiday home stretch. Thanks to my wife's expertise in the kitchen — and the central location of the Rockwell mansion — we tend to play host for the big family feast and what seems like a never ending stream of well wishers.

They all arrive thirsty; so finding drinkable wine options that lets you pour like Santa, even though you've spent like Scrooge, is every host's Christmas wish. Since trying to appeal to a variety of personal preferences is never easy I recommend going with a bright, fruity red and a fresh, dry white with an eye on larger format bottles to save a few bucks.

An Aussie shiraz is the quintessential cocktail red (meaning it shines without food) with Lindemans 2008 Bin 50 Shiraz (1500 ml, $22.95 - $24.99) a jammy mix of black raspberry, red licorice and a lingering touch of pepper spice.

For a crisp, straightforward white think Italy and Fontana di Papa's 2008 Colli Albani (1000 ml, $8.35 - $10.79): a classic bargain blend of malvasia and trebbiano that's ripe with refreshing green fruit and tastes best served ice cold right out of the fridge.

Prices reflect the range across the country. Some products may not be available in all provinces.

Peter Rockwell is the everyman's wine writer, working in the liquor industry for more than 25 years. Follow him on twitter @TheRealWineGuy and email liquidassets@eastlink.ca.

AFI's top 10 movies
The American Film Institute has announced its list of Top 10 movies with honours going to Coraline, The Hangover, The Hurt Locker, The Messenger, Precious, A Serious Man, A Single Man, Sugar, Up and Up in the Air. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Entertainment

Viking voyage
Leonardo DiCaprio is set to star in a film directed by Mel Gibson that's set in the world of Viking culture, Variety reports. The script is by the writer who won an Oscar for The Departed. EW.COM

EDITOR: DEAN.LISK@METRONEWS.CA

Basterds, Nine lead Critics' Choice pack

MOVIE Inglourious Basterds and Nine lead contenders for the Critics' Choice Movie Awards with 10 nominations each, including best picture.

Other best-picture nominees are Avatar, An Education, The Hurt Locker, Invictus, Precious, A Serious Man, Up and Up in the Air. Best-actor nominees are Jeff Bridges for Crazy Heart, George Clooney for Up in the Air, Colin Firth for A Single Man, Morgan Freeman for Invictus, Viggo Mortensen for The Road and Jeremy Renner for Hurt Locker.

L.A. awards go to Mo'Nique, Waltz

MOVIES Mo'Nique has won the supporting-actress award for Precious and Christoph Waltz has earned the supporting-actor prize for Inglourious Basterds from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association.

Mo'Nique won for her role as a hateful welfare mom in Precious. Waltz for his role as a savage Nazi in Inglourious Basterds. Canadian-born director Jason Reitman and writer Sheldon Turner shared the screenplay prize for Up in the Air. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Strange' job rewarded

Johnny Depp accepts Bahamas lifetime achievement award

Hollywood heartthrob Johnny Depp suspects he'll never get used to receiving awards for his acting work.

Depp, best known for his Oscar-nominated role as Captain Jack Sparrow in Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean blockbusters, made the comments Sunday night before receiving a career achievement award at the Bahamas International Film Festival.

"Whenever anybody says they are going to give me some kind of award, I'm always a little stupefied by the notion. The first thing I say is 'why?'," Depp told a small scrum of reporters. "I just go to work like anyone else, except my job happens to be a little stranger."

Lit by cameras during a red carpet event, Depp said he planned on spending Christmas on his private island ringed with white sand off Exuma.

"The place is as close to paradise as anywhere you can get," said Depp, wearing a black pinstriped suit and tinted glasses with heavy black frames.

> **"I'm still amazed I get jobs after all this time."**
> Johnny Depp

Fellow acting superstar Sean Connery, who also owns a home in the Bahamas, presented Depp with the award at the Balmoral Club in Nassau.

The festival's founder, Leslie Vanderpool, described Depp as an "icon" who is one of the finest actors of his generation.

"What makes this tribute to Johnny even more special is that he has a home in the Bahamas and possesses a true love and appreciation for the region and culture," Vanderpool said in a statement.

Depp's diverse screen credits through the years include starring roles in Donnie Brasco, Edward Scissorhands, and What's Eating Gilbert Grape.

Johnny Depp received a career achievement award at the Bahamas International Film Festival.

In September, Disney announced that a new Pirates of the Caribbean film is on the horizon. Depp will reprise his celebrated role as Sparrow in Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides, slated for summer of 2011.

Depp said he's enjoyed playing all of his screen characters. "I'm still amazed I get jobs after all this time," he quipped.

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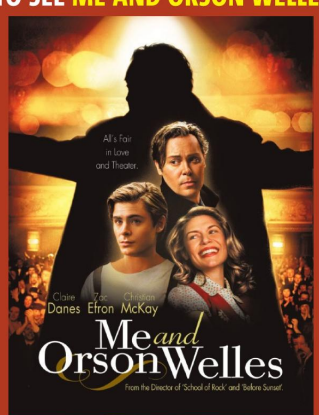

IN THEATRES DECEMBER 11

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John K. Samson stripped away

KEITH CARMAN
for Metro Canada

We know what you're thinking: "John K. Samson ... why does that name ring a bell?"

It shouldn't be a surprise that Samson's name evokes familiarity. He's been around. Punk rockers recall his stint as bassist for Prairie-based political outfit Propagandhi while those who lean towards more radio-friendly music have seen/heard Samson's enticingly soft voice at the helm of indie rockers The Weakerthans for the last 12 years.

Yet when he hits the stage on tour, all of that will be stripped away. Samson is currently performing solo in support of his latest endeavour, an EP entitled City Route 85.

While it's not unheard of for lead singers to venture forth with their own music, Samson's foray features a unique twist. The three-song release is his first in a collection of four efforts dedicated to and inspired by his native Winnipeg's streets. Yep, Samson's writing about life on the road but in a very different way.

The Weakerthans frontman John K. Samson's new solo EP City Route 85, is inspired by the streets of his native Winnipeg.

"Most people wouldn't know it — including most 'Peggers — but City Route 85 is actually our main street commonly referred to as Portage Avenue," he notes.

He continues on to discuss how such a revelation led to the notion of dedicating a series of EPs to municipal and provincial thoroughfares.

"I'm looking at stretches or segments of highway and how the place affects the people, location, landscape and history," he reveals.

Samson's idea is a strange path of its own. Still, the yield in songs such as Grace General, Cruise Night and the title track make it worthwhile. A collection of light and breezy albeit compelling observations related in Samson's inherently delicate, descriptive manner — songs feel more like stories related over a musical backdrop than typical, basic rhyming couplets squished between guitar riffs — City Route 85 is a grandiose experience compacted into less than 10 minutes.

"I like the idea of a focused theme — exploring contemporary small-town life," he beams before admitting, "So far, it's only a project I work on when I have the time. I have the next one sketched out."

Thurman tired of controlling fiancé?

Uma Thurman ended her engagement because her ex-fiancé was too controlling. The actress reportedly split from French financier Arpad Busson because she was tired of him trying to take over her life, femalefirst.co.uk reports. METRO NEWS SERVICES

The Nanny Returns 10 years after book The Nanny Diaries

Seven years ago, the best-selling novel The Nanny Diaries introduced us to Nan Hutchinson, an intelligent and compassionate nanny.

Through her eyes, readers watched wealthy New Yorkers focus on their social lives and neglect the emotional needs of their children, including little Grayer, the son of Nan's employers, Mr. and Mrs. X.

Now (in fictional story time) it's 2008, a decade later. Nan is 33, married and building a business as a consultant. Her nanny days would seem to be long behind her. But fate sweeps her back into the lives of Mr. and Mrs. X and to Grayer, now a surly teenager who follows family tradition by treating her like dirt.

So we begin Nanny Returns. And the toxic parenting mess Nan encounters looks a lot like the one she left. It takes only four pages for the first outrage to pop up, as a rich blond mom rushes toward her delighted toddler on the street, only to drop her shopping bags with relief on the kid's stroller and keep on walking as her shocked child wails.

It gets worse, as we meet the parents at the pricey private school Nan comes to work for. To the grown-ups in this world, children seem to be little more than annoyances.

In the midst of this, Nan tries to reclaim Grayer and care for his sweet seven-year-old brother, Stilton, both of whom are eventually abandoned by Mr. and Mrs. X.

Authors Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus tell a fast-moving tale, full of callous and over-the-top behaviour by their wealthy targets. A husband tells his wife to stay away while he unveils his new Marc Chagall painting to his friends because her pregnancy is "too distracting."

It's fun to read as long as you don't think about what this world does to the kids and spouses. (Yes, it's fiction, but it can still make your blood boil.)

In any case, if you don't happen to be rich, it sure lets you feel morally superior.

There is a happy ending. Well, it's an ending that suggests a potentially happy future for little Stilton.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Robbie rebounds

British pop star overcomes addiction and finds happiness

TALIA SOGHOMONIAN
Metro World News

Robbie Williams became an international star as 20 per cent of boy band Take That.

Two stints in rehab and a move to the U.S. later, and the 35-year-old singer now seems to be stable and happy in Los Angeles. With a new album Reality Killed The Video Star in stores — and the media getting over-excited about whether he has asked girlfriend Ayda Field to marry him — things have rarely looked better for Robbie.

Q You were away for three years — how's the comeback?

A It actually feels a bit strange that it is a comeback. Shakira just took four years off between records; U2 took five years off; So in relative terms, it really isn't that long. But people and the tabloids and the media seem to have scripted it as such.

Q Your album is a hit, so you must be relieved?

A The fans got a bit confused when I put out Rudebox. It scared the majority of them. I'm just happy that this album has given them what they wanted from me.

Q Because Rudebox was more experimental?

A It's only when you put out an album like Rudebox that you realize that you're not the kind of artist who can be experimental and have a bit of a laugh. You realize that you are part of a massive machine whose wheels can come off very easily with one wrong move.

Q Does all that expectation put even more pressure on you?

A Yes, because at home the great British press have kind of got their knives out for me. Everybody's willing for me to fail because that's what they do over there!

Q What is the biggest misconception about Robbie Williams?

A I don't really know what the biggest misconception is about me, there's quite a few out there! I'm terrified of the British press. I've moved countries to get away from them!

Q How is the move to L.A.?

A It's good. It's sunny most of the time and living is laid-back. To wake up in the sun every morning just makes everything better.

Q Did living in California help you battle your demons, away from the British press?

A I was sober in England for about three years. But it's easier to stay sober in Los Angeles, everybody talks therapy talk out there. There's a much better understanding of addiction, depression and ailments in general.

Q You found love in L.A. — did that help?

A It hasn't hindered me. She's right next to me right now in a loving caress. It's a perfect headline and I don't to say that because it sounds trite, but she certainly hasn't hindered my recovery process and my mental stability. She's wonderful!

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Actor needs kidney transplant

Grizzwald Chapman, known to most as Tracy Morgan's sidekick on NBC's 30 Rock, is in dire need of a kidney transplant, the actor has revealed during a taping of The Dr. Oz Show. POPEATER.COM

Pushing boundaries

'I'm going to make all my movies in 3-D:' Cameron

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News

Nearly 15 years after he originally conceived of the project and after more than four years of development, James Cameron finally brings his epic Avatar to the screen. The film explores an alien culture through the eyes of Jake (Sam Worthington), a marine who falls in love with Neytiri (Zoe Saldana), one of the natives on the alien planet Pandora. We caught up with Cameron in London to discuss the massive undertaking that is Avatar, pushing the boundaries of 3-D technology and a possible sequel.

Q How important was it to push the boundaries of 3-D filmmaking with this project?

A Up until now, every filmmaker who's made a 3-D film has really felt it incumbent upon themselves to constantly remind you that you're watching a 3-D movie. It's usually things that are floating or poking out of the screen. If I'm constantly reminding you that you're watching a 3-D movie, then you're constantly sitting there reminded that you're in a movie theatre.

So we approached the 3-D as if it were a window, or a portal into a reality. We didn't look for opportunities to constantly exercise our 3-D muscle in front of you. Maybe one thing that Avatar can achieve is to become an example of a mature use of stereoscopic 3-D.

Let it move out of its adolescence into a mature acceptance as just part of the cinematic art by serious filmmakers. I don't have a problem with that. I'm going to make all my movies in 3-D, no matter what the subject matter.

Q But Avatar is also being released in 2-D.

A We try not to make the film a 3-D film first. With some 3-D movies, you watch them in 2-D and there's a shot of a spear sticking out of the screen that they hold on for 10 seconds.

It's all sorts of fun in 3-D, but in 2-D it looks like the stupidest edit in the world. So we wanted to make sure we weren't doing that sort of thing. We're very proud of the 2-D version of the film we've put out. But it really comes down to consumer choice. I think of the 3-D as the premium experience of the film and the 2-D as the excellent base-level presentation of the film.

Q At the same time, there are strong environmental and political messages in the film. How did you work those in?

A I think it's less an intellectual message and more something you feel emotionally. I wanted people to feel the environmental message, not think about it, not have it droning on as information.

It's kind of the exact opposite of An Inconvenient Truth, with the bar graphs and all that. In an adventure film, it's more important to get these concepts viscerally. Historically, the kind of science fiction that I grew up on had a message. Usually it was a dystopian message, usually it was in the form of some kind of warning. And as much as I loved Star Wars, it was a moment in history when science fiction became more escapist fantasy and less a kind of intellectual medium. Avatar is an attempt to merge science fiction back to its roots of having a warning.

More than four years in making, James Cameron's Avatar promises to combine the best of technology and storytelling.

Avatar opens in theatres on Friday

Q The Na'vi language is very complex. How was it developed?

A It started off innocently enough as I was writing the script. I was just sort of free-associating. And when I found Dr. Paul Frommer, who is the head of the linguistics department at USC in Los Angeles, he started to riff on that. He wanted to find things that the actors could still pronounce, but which would sound a little bit alien to our ear — at least in terms of European-based cultures. So he went to Indonesian sounds and bushmen clicks, things like that.

Q Is there going to be a sequel?

A I have it mapped out ... It all depends on whether we do well with the first film. But that was certainly the intention from the beginning. When I pitched this... I said, "You know, we're going to have spend a lot of money and time and energy. So it really makes sense to think of it as the potential start of a franchise." We used to joke that we'd cut to 10 years later, and Jake's kind of fat, sitting on the couch in a palm tree, and he's like, "Hey, honey, get me a beer." And Neytiri says, "Get your own beer!"

UNRATED
The HANGOVER
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MTV finds Teen Wolf actors
MTV has cast four actors in its upcoming Teen Wolf series, a re-imagining of the 1985 movie starring Michael J. Fox: Tyler Posey, Tyler Hoechlin, Crystal Reed and Dylan O'Brien will appear in the new version. EW.COM

In hip hop, Drake's best we ever had

Toronto rapper's got massive buzz

CHRIS PIZZELLO/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto hip-hop artists Drake has had made a dizzying ascent in the rap world — and he's done it without having released a proper album.

On his hit single Best I Ever Had, Canadian rapper Drake bragged that he had "buzz so big, I could probably sell a blank disc."

And in a way, he has done just that.

The Toronto hip-hop star has had made a dizzying ascent in the rap world — and he's done it without having released a proper album.

He has three top 20 singles in the U.S. and two Grammy nominations, he's collaborated with Jay-Z, Kanye West and Eminem, and he even had to shoot down rumours of a relationship with Barbadian pop star Rihanna (poor guy).

In a matter of months, he's become one of Canada's most prominent hip-hop exports ever, and one question remains: How did the former Degrassi star go from the cosy environs of Toronto's wealthy Forest Hill enclave to hanging around with Lil Wayne?

"You know what, I'll tell you honestly: it's the hustle and the drive," Toronto hip-hop artist Kardinal Offishall told The Canadian Press in a recent interview.

"I've seen Drake from a few years ago to where he's at now. It's not just because Lil Wayne picked him up or because he had an Internet buzz. I've seen him literally give it everything that he had, 150,000 per cent, in order to make it."

"It's the hustle and the drive. It's not just because Lil Wayne picked him up or because he had an Internet buzz. I've seen him literally give it everything that he had, 150,000 per cent, in order to make it."
Kardinal Offishall

And make it he has.

Born Aubrey Drake Graham in Memphis to a black father and a white Jewish mother, Drake moved to Toronto as a child after his parents divorced.

He got his big break in 2001 at the age of 14 when he was cast on Degrassi: The Next Generation as Jimmy Brooks, a high-school basketball star who eventually surrenders his hoop dreams after being shot in the back, leaving him confined to a wheelchair.

In 2006, Drake self-published his first mixtape, Room for Improvement. That led to Replacement Girl, his collaboration with Virginia R&B crooner Trey Songz that was the lead single on Drake's 2007 mixtape, Comeback Season, and which caught the attention of New Orleans rapper Lil Wayne.

Soon, Drake was tucked under Weezy's wing, riding shotgun with a rapper on the cusp of superduperstardom.

In 2008, Lil Wayne's Tha Carter III went platinum in a week and went on to sell more copies than any other album that year. In September '08, the rapper stepped onstage at the MTV Video Music Awards for a collaboration with Leona Lewis and T-Pain.

Shirtless and behind heavy dark shades, Lil Wayne crept down a staircase and rapped a verse that actually wasn't his. Lines like "I'm losing my mind like: 'Damn where my roof just go?' Top slipped off like Janet at the Super Bowl" actually belonged to Drake, then still a mostly unknown MC.

And when Lewis launched into the song's hook (from Nina Simone's Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood), Lil Wayne gave credit where it was due, rasping overtop: "Drizzy Drake, I love you boy!"

A few months after that high-profile endorsement, Drake dropped his next mixtape, So Far Gone, to almost unprecedented buzz for an emerging artist.

Drake was Weezy's protege and showed the influence of Wayne's mischievous, meticulous rhymes. But he arguably owed more to Kanye West, with his exploration of the space between swagger and self-criticism and his unfailing ear for melody.

The mixtape's swooning single Best I Ever Had was a perfect showcase, with Drake crooning the ballad's hook and rapping its intermittently sweet lyrics ("Sweat pants, hair tied, chillin' with no makeup on/ That's when you're the prettiest, I hope that you don't take it wrong").

The song went to No. 2 on the U.S. charts. Drake, still without a record label or official album, became the target of a major-label bidding war (Lil Wayne's Cash Money Records, under the Universal umbrella, ultimately won).

Drake began crafting his album debut, Thank Me Later, scheduled for the first quarter of 2010.

Meantime, his songs continued to get major airplay on both sides of the border. "Drake knows how to write records that are about big ideas," Washington rapper Wale.

"Look at the names of his songs: Fear, Forever, Winner. Those are big ideas."

Toronto-raised hip-hop artist K'naan was more blunt: "He's very good." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Kid Rock, Grohl sue bar

Kid Rock and Dave Grohl are suing a small town bar for allegedly jacking their tunes. The two rockers dropped a copyright infringement lawsuit on a Canton, Ohio watering hole because it allegedly didn't have the licensing it needed to play their music. TMZ.COM

DVD picks

Inglourious Basterds

Director: Quentin Tarantino

PURE WISH-FULFILMENT fantasy by Quentin Tarantino (Once upon a time in Nazi-occupied France...), in which Hitler and his stooges stand to get what's coming to them, in a way that makes cinema itself seem like the grand liberator.

Grammatically challenged, factually unhinged and too long for its own good, this World War II thriller nevertheless soars thanks to one glorious performance.

It's not the one you think.

The film's real star is Austria's Christoph Waltz, a multilingual wizard who inhabits the role of Col. Hans Landa, the smirking Gestapo officer known as "The Jew Hunter" for his uncanny sleuthing.

The Hangover

Director: Todd Phillips

A NO-STAR cast takes a shop-worn theme about boys being bad in Las Vegas, and turns it into something fresh, funny and profitable — $277 million (U.S.) for the domestic market, enough to make it history's most successful "R" rated comedy. Take that, Hollywood know-it-alls!

This is one clever little film. Director Todd Phillips and scripters Jon Lucas and Scott Moore cleverly keep us in suspense about how the monster hangover happened. First they show us the aftermath as three confused groomsmen (Bradley Cooper, Ed Helms and Zach Galifianakis) turn Vegas upside down in their quest for their missing groom (Justin Bartha) after their bachelor party goes hilariously awry.

Peter Howell/for Metro Canada

Oscars extend noms to 10

Academy Awards organizers have shaken up their show by doubling the best-picture category to 10 nominees in hopes of a broader range of films, mainstream movies mixing with the sober dramas that Oscar voters often favour.

The cast of Star Trek, which could be nominated for Best Picture at next year's Academy Awards.

The upside: If crowd-pleasers such as Up and Star Trek make the cut, it could give audiences more reason to watch the Oscars, whose ho-hum TV ratings often climb in years when blockbusters are in the running.

The downside: The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences could end up nominating 10 boring movies instead of the usual five, giving fans no new incentive to tune in to a show where rich and famous people spend a long evening patting the backs of other rich and famous people.

"The Academy Awards are very important to the industry because they're a commercial for the business. Every year, they're watched worldwide," said Andrew Kosove, a new academy member and a producer on The Blind Side, the sports-themed drama that's become a surprise box-office smash and has caught some best-picture buzz.

"If all the nominees are films that are artistically wonderful but commercially obscure, what happens is the interest in the show has dissipated, and that's bad for the business."

The show drew its biggest audience for the 1997 awards year, when Titanic swamped the box office with a record $1.8 billion haul worldwide and dominated the Oscars.

On a general decline since, the ratings spiked for the 2003 Oscar year, when the final chapter in the The Lord of the Rings blockbusters swept the awards.

Having 10 best-picture nominees is not unprecedented.

The Golden Globes, whose nominations come out today, have 10 or more best-picture nominees each year, divided into two categories: best drama and best musical or comedy.

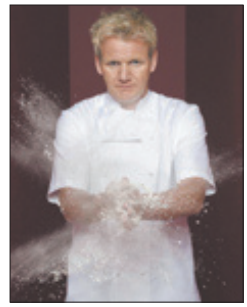
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CA	Vu	SC	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
12/15/09	267	351 - ACCESS	Alberta Primetime (Live)		Stargate Atlantis (DVS)		*Lies My Mother Told Me* (2005, Docudrama), Colm Feore				Primetime
	243	317 3 CFCN	etalk	Access H.	Flashpoint		So You Think You Can Dance		Flashpoint		CTV News
	-	- 4 OMNI	The Office	The Simpsons	Omni News: S. Asian Edition		Omni News: Cantonese Edition		Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Metropia
	-	371 5 KXLY	4 News at 6	4 News at 6:30	Entertainment	The Insider (N)	A Charlie Brown Christmas		Scrubs	Better Off Ted	the forgotten
	245	306 6 CBRT	Wheel Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Xmas Carol	Frosty Returns	Legend of Frosty		CBC News: The National		The Hour
	244	338 7 CICT	ET Canada	Entertainment	The Good Wife (N)		NCIS "Faith" (HDTV) (N)		Gordon Ramsay: Cook		News Final (N)
	246	- 8 CKAL	Law & Order: SVU		The Jay Leno Show (N)		Scrubs		Scrubs	Better Off Ted	Your City
	119	705 9 CBXFT	Martin sur la route (N) (SC)		15 ans de Petite Vie (N) (SC)		Le Grand Rire 2009 (N) (SC)		Le Téléjournal Nouvelles. (SC)		TJ Alberta
primetime	-	- 10 SHAW	(6) Local Programming						Local Programming		
	-	372 12 KREM	News	Access H.	The Doctors		NCIS "Faith" (HDTV) (N)		NCIS: Los Angeles (N)		The Good Wife
	-	374 14 KSPS	PBS NewsHour (N)		Nova (HDTV) (DVS)		Savage Planet		Frontline: From Jesus to Christ-First Christians		
	502	390 15 CBC	CBC News: The National		CBC News: the fifth estate		CBC News: The National		CBC News: The National		fifth estate
	-	370 16 KHQ	News (N)	Millionaire	Jeopardy! (N)	Wheel Fortune	The Sing-Off Two groups leave. (N)				Jay Leno Show
	-	373 22 KAYU	The Office	Raymond	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	So You Think You Can Dance		Gordon Ramsay: Cook		News
	297	652 37 WPIX	The Vampire Diaries		PIX News at Ten Tong.		Two/Half Men	Friends	Friends	According-Jim	Family Guy
news	500	500 29 CNN	Larry King Live (N)		Anderson Cooper 360 (HDTV)				Larry King Live		Cooper 360
	508	502 31 CNN2	The Joy Behar Show		Nancy Grace		Showbiz Tonight		The Joy Behar Show		Nancy Grace
sports	400	400 21 TSN	NBA Basketball		Women's Hockey Canada vs. United States. From Calgary, Alta.					Boxing: Dawson vs. Johnson	
	408	418 27 net	Oilers Conn	NHL Hockey Los Angeles Kings at Edmonton Oilers. (HDTV) (Live)					Sportsnet Connected (N)		Telus Oilers
	410	403 30 SCORE	(6) Court Surfing NBA news, scores and highlights.				Score Now		Score Now		Score Now
	411	457 44 OLN	Survivorman		Ghost Hunters International		Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Survivorman		Ghost Hunters
	417	406 48 SPEED	Super Bikes!	Super Bikes!	Dangerous Drives (HDTV)		Pass Time	Pass Time	Monster Jam (HDTV)		Super Bikes!
family	552	543 20 YTV	Christmas That Almost		OddParents	Flintstone Xms	Malcolm-Mid.	Fresh Prince	8 Simple Rules	What I Like	Family Biz
	557	541 39 FAM	Han. Montana	Wizards-Place	Sonny Chance	Zack & Cody	Overruled!	Han. Montana	Wizards-Place	Latest Buzz	Ned's School
	555	545 67 TOON	Jimmy Two	Johnny Test	Scooby-Doo	Total Drama	Total Drama	6TEEN	Futurama	King of the Hill	American Dad
	575	583 11 CMT	According-Jim	According-Jim	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Donner Down	The Gift	Reba	Reba	According-Jim
	553	546 17 TREE	Little Bear	Maggie-Beast	Babar	Zigby	Max & Ruby	Dragon (DVS)	Backyardigans	Ni Hao, Kai-lan	Go, Diego, Go!
	505	398 19 TWN	(5) EarthWatch One		EarthWatch One		EarthWatch Two				
	602	568 23 W	Grocery Bag	Maxed Out	*Holiday Wishes* (2006, Drama) Amber Benson.				*Eve's Christmas* (2004, Comedy-Drama)		
	521	560 24 TLC	Kids-Counting	18 Kids-Count	Little Couple	Little Couple	Table for 12	Table for 12	Kids-Counting	18 Kids-Count	Little Couple
	603	561 25 FOOD	The F Word (N)		Good Eats	Good Eats	Iron Chef America		Unwrapped	Unwrapped	The F Word
	615	520 26 A&E	Psychic Kids: Paranormal		Paranormal State (N)		Paranormal	Paranormal	(10:01) Criminal Minds		Psychic Kids
	617	522 32 SHOW	Trailer Park	Trailer Park	The Outer Limits		*A Woman's Rage* (2008, Suspense) Brandy Ledford.				Bones
	601	562 33 SLICE	Wedding SOS	Wedding SOS	Bulging Brides	Bulging Brides	ET Canada	Whatever	Work Out		Brat Camp
	-	633 34 ENC2	Danish Poet	(7:20) *Kootenai Brown* ★★ (1991, Western)			*City Slickers* ★★★ (1991, Comedy) Billy Crystal, Daniel Stern.				*Blazing*
	520	505 35 DISC	Destroyed	Destroyed	Time Warp (N)		Daily Planet		Destroyed	Destroyed	Time Warp
	620	523 36 BRAVO	Johnny Cash Christmas		Johnny Cash Christmas		Law & Order		Without a Trace		*Rich in Love*
	294	650 40 WPCH	Law & Order: SVU		*Runaway Bride* ★★ (1999, Romance-Comedy) Julia Roberts.					*Runaway Bride* (1999)	
	626	547 41 COM	Just for Laughs		Air Farce	22 Minutes	Corner Gas	Name Is Earl	The Simpsons	South Park	Jeff Dunham
	-	539 42 TCM	(6) *Gone With the Wind* ★★★★ (1939, Romance) Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh.						*The Making of a Legend: Gone With the Wind*		
	628	584 43 SPIKE	(5) UFC Fight Night		Most Shocking Moments		World's Most Shocking		When Stunts Go Bad 2!		CSI: Cri. Scene
	522	516 45 HIST	Ultimate Engineering		Ancient Discoveries		Cities of the Underworld		Cities of the Underworld		Engineering
	627	528 46 SPACE	Medium (HDTV) (N)		Fringe "Grey Matters"		InnerSpace (N)	Stargate SG-1		Star Trek: Next Gener.	
	-	- 47 AMC	(6) *The Green Mile* ★★★ (1999, Drama) Tom Hanks, David Morse.						(10:15) *The Hunt for Red October*		
cable variety	619	525 49 TROP	Prod. Parker	Prod. Parker	'70s Show	'70s Show	The Outer Limits		ET Canada	Switch	Family Guy
	600	564 50 HGTV	Pure Design	Genevieve	House Hunters	House Hunters	Holmes on Homes		HGTV's Top 10	Design Inc.	Pure Design
	501	391 52 CTV	CTV News Tonight		CTV News	CTV News	CTV News	CTV News	CTV News	CTV News	CTV News
	504	508 70 BNN	Squeeze Play		Business News	Commodities	Market Call Tonight		Headline	Commodities	Squeeze Play
	526	507 92 VIVA	The Closer (Part 2 of 2)		Cold Case		Psychic Inv.	Ghostly Enc.	Judging Amy		Missing
	269	350 93 APTN	Fish Out	Mixed Blessing	Cashing In	Rabbit Fall	Blackfly	Moose TV	Rez Rides	Moccasin Flats	Short Cuts
	-	- 94 MCP	World News	News	Sewing Maid	Boys Over Flo	Il Caffe		In Germany	Euromaxx	Schauplatz
	571	581 100 MMM	I Want to Work for Diddy		Entourage	Wild 'n Out	mmtop10.ca		I Want to Work for Diddy		Entourage
	570	580 101 MM	The Vampire Diaries		*The American Mall* (2008, Musical Comedy) Nina Dobrev.				Year of Teen Power		disBAND
	581	566 102 MTV	Teen Mom		Teen Mom (N)		MTV Live	Sex, News-Roll	Jersey Shore		Teen Mom
	-	- 116 TV5	(6) *Figaro*	Cadeau	Avenirs	Hors série	TV5 Le Journal		(9:35) L'Objet du scandale		

critics' corner

Gordon Ramsay: Cookalong Live

Known as much for his temper as his culinary skills, the famed chef shows a friendlier side in this one-hour special, as he provides step-by-step instructions for cooking a three-course meal. On the menu: angel hair pasta with shrimp, chili peppers and tomatoes; steak Diane with sauteed potatoes and peas; and a quick tiramisu for dessert. 10 PM on CICT KAYU



The Good Wife

A judge known for handing down questionable sentences overturns a simple plea deal arranged by Alicia, causing her to question his motives. Will is delighted when Diane receives an offer she can't refuse in the new episode "Lifeguard." 8 PM on CICT; 11 PM on KREM

NCIS

When the enlisted son of a retired colonel-turned-preacher is found dead, the team thinks he may be the victim of a hate crime. At home, Gibbs tries to get to the reason behind his father's recent change in behavior while the latter is visiting. Ralph Waite guest stars as Gibbs' dad in the new episode "Faith." 9 PM on CICT KREM

Court rules for hospital extension

ASSAULT A British court has ordered a man to remain hospitalized after he admitted assaulting singer Leona Lewis during a book signing session.

Peter Kowalczyk had been charged with punching the pop star in the face as she went to sign his copy of her autobiography in central London on Oct. 14.

Kowalczyk pleaded guilty to common assault. A judge ordered the 29-year-old to remain in the hospital under mental health laws.

Prosecutor Melanie Lee, reading out a witness statement by Lewis, said yesterday the singer felt completely devastated by the attack. In the statement Lewis says: "Now I am very frightened about going out in public."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kenya's Style
Kenya Hunt
Exclusively at metronews.ca/globalstyle

Sags win out over scalpels
Dame Judi Dench feels "too old" for cosmetic surgery. The 75-year-old actress admits she hates getting older but worries she has left it too late to alter her appearance, femalefirst.co.uk reports. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Celebrity Buzz

Lindsay in the Twitter

THINK BEFORE YOU TWEET Lindsay Lohan's habitual Twittering may have brought an early end to her trip to India for aid work and a BBC documentary. "Over 40 children saved so far within one day's work. This is what life is about," Lohan posted to her profile, referring to a raid in New Delhi that that saved children being held captive in workshops. "She did not say she was present at the raid, this is a misinterpretation," a rep for the BBC tells the Daily Telegraph. "She was merely referring to a raid that happened connected to child trafficking." METRO NEWS SERVICES

Chace's woes

POOR PRETTY BOY Chace Crawford hated being a model, femalefirst.co.uk reports. The Gossip Girl actor says he didn't enjoy his time in the modelling world but knows his good looks have helped him in his career.

He said, "I did some catalogue work in Dallas, just to make some extra money. I hate modelling.

"But I'm not ignorant to the fact that part of the reason why Gossip Girl is poplar and part of the reason why people want to see it is to be like, 'Oh, novelty boy! Hot boy! Pretty boy!'" METRO NEWS SERVICES

Leona's little green men

CONCERNED FOR THE EARTH AND BEYOND Pop singer Leona Lewis is a firm believer in life on other planets. "The universe is too big for us to be the only life forms," Lewis tells the Sun. "We've done so much damage I worry the world will have to end and start again," METRO WORLD NEWS

Jude and Sienna shack up

HERE WE GO AGAIN Jude Law, 36, and Sienna Miller, 27, are moving in together, femalefirst.co.uk reports.

The pair — who have rekindled their romance after splitting up in 2006 when the actor had an affair with his children's nanny — are so "in love" they are now looking to buy a new London pad early next year so they can be together all the time.

A source told Britain's The Sun newspaper, "Last week they put the wheels in motion to live together again. They have told staff that they are in love and will be moving back to London in the spring and they will be living together as a couple once again."

The on-and-off couple grew close again recently when they both starred in separate Broadway shows in New York at the same time, Jude appearing in Hamlet and Sienna in Miss Julie.

The pair were recently spotted leaving Law's New York apartment together, sparking rumours of a reconciliation.

They first met on the set of Alfie in 2004.

The source added, "Jude was reluctant at first for anything to happen. But Sienna convinced him that she was still in love with him." METRO NEWS SERVICES

Taylor Swift gives big bucks

BIRTHDAY BONUS SCHOOLS Taylor Swift is no longer a teen. The country superstar marked turning 20 with a Christmas-themed birthday party for friends, her band and her tour crew at her family's home in Hendersonville, Tenn, people.com reports.

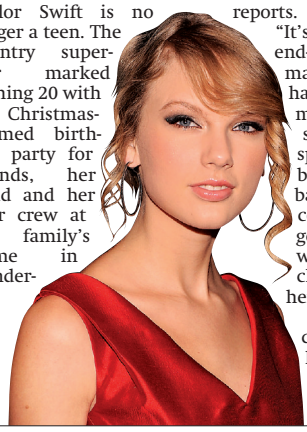
"It's more like an end-of-year Christmas party that happens to be on my birthday," says Swift, who spent the night before at home, baking butter cookies and gingerbread cookies with cream-cheese icing for her guests.

The biggest gift came from Swift herself. The singer has donated $250,000 to schools around the country that she's either attended or worked with.

The money will pay teachers' salaries as well as buy books and fund various educational programs.

"Something I wanted to do at the end of this amazing year and especially on my birthday was give back to something I really believe in, which is education," says Swift.

"The schools that I went to and the amazing people I got to learn from really turned me into who I am, and I wanted to give back." METRO NEWS SERVICES



Brand browsing for diamonds?

HE KISSED A GIRL Russell Brand has been shopping for a diamond ring — sparking rumours he is going to propose to girlfriend Katy Perry, people.com reports.

The British comic star was photographed looking at bands at exclusive London jewellers Cartier on Friday with one specific sparkler catching his eye.

A source said, "His face lit up when he saw this one particular diamond ring.

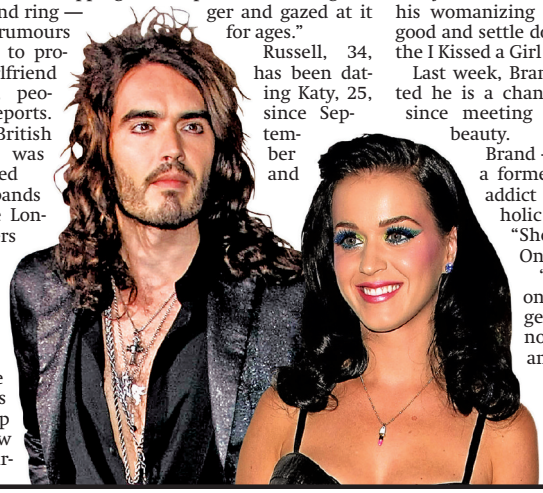
He put it on his ring finger and gazed at it for ages."

Russell, 34, has been dating Katy, 25, since September and it looks as though he is ready to turn his back on his womanizing ways for good and settle down with the I Kissed a Girl singer.

Last week, Brand admitted he is a changed man since meeting the pop beauty.

Brand — who is a former heroin addict and alcoholic — said, "She's 'The One.'

"I'm a one-woman gentleman now. She's amazing." METRO NEWS SERVICES



Michelle has her secrets

SHE DOESN'T KISS AND TELL Michelle Rodriguez is tired of having to respond to questions about her sexuality. "If I wanted to tell people what I do … I'd have made a sex video a long time ago," the Avatar star says, who has been rumoured to be lesbian or bisexual according to Showbiz Spy. "Largely, people don't know the whole story about anything. But still they need to put a name on it so they can label it and put it on the side and not dedicate any time to figuring it out. It's laziness." METRO WORLD NEWS

Celebrity tweets

LL Cool J is not a fan of rocking, Demi Moore can't stand the rain, Yoko Ono wants you to start small and Neil Diamond does the holidays big-time.

• @llcoolj Do not confuse motion and progress. A rocking horse keeps moving but does not make any progress.

• @mrskutcher Trying to holiday shop in the pouring rain....bah humbug!

• @yokoono Give up meat one day and then two days maybe. It's a very, very intelligent idea.

• @NeilDiamond Sang for the President and Mrs. Obama last night. Terrific.

Wished them a Merry Christmas and a Happy Chanukah. METRO WORLD NEWS

Richie goes dark

BRUNETTE IS BEST On Saturday, Nicole Richie debuted a darker do, usmagazine.com reports.

"I hadn't done it in about two years," the mother-of-two, 28, told usmagazine.com. "So I was just ready and sick of being blonde." METRO NEWS SERVICES

Brown hits back

RETAIL RETALIATION After hearing reports from his Twitter followers that retail managers around the country had been refusing to stock his new album, Chris Brown shot back, posting that "the industry can kiss my ass." METRO WORLD NEWS

Garth is a such a romantic

I'M LOVIN' IT? As far as anniversaries go, Garth Brooks and Trisha Yearwood must have to be "lovin' it," people.com reports.

Brooks, who came out of retirement and officially began his five-year run of shows at Wynn Las Vegas on Saturday, had a fancy dinner planned to celebrate his fouth anniversary with Yearwood, but suddenly that meal became McDonald's French fries.

"That was our anniversary dinner," he told reporters. METRO NEWS SERVICES

Jessica has 'fallen for Billy'

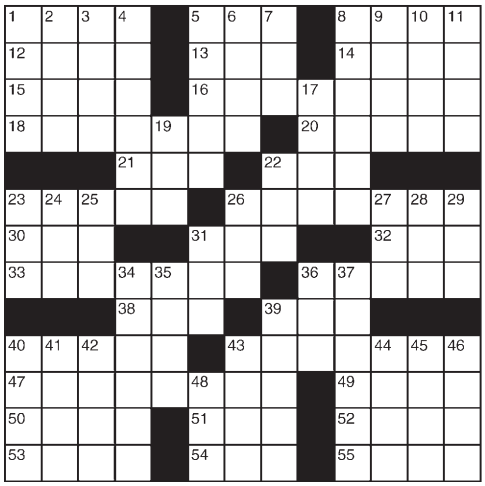
ODDEST COUPLE EVER Though she's said to be taking it slow, Jessica Simpson is totally smitten with Smashing Pumpkins front-man Billy Corgan, sources close to the pop star say. "She has completely fallen for Billy and his easygoing, smart attitude. She says she wants to take things a lot further," sources say, according to Hollyscoop. "She had secretly been crushing on him for months and felt there was a connection." METRO WORLD NEWS

BREAKFAST TELEVISION

Today Partly cloudy -9 C / -25 C
Wednesday Mostly sunny 0 C / -14 C
Thursday Mostly sunny 0 C / -9 C

Andrew Schultz, Meteorologist – Breakfast Television
"I get to spread the word on how your day, evening or weekend will shape up with our ever-changing weather here in Alberta."
WEEKDAYS AT 6 A.M.

Take Five



ACROSS

1 Initial stake
5 Resort
8 Obama's predecessor
12 — -garou (werewolf)
13 Sept. preceder
14 "Do — others ..."
15 Choir member
16 Pop-up's opposite
18 More healthy
20 Urban disturbances
21 "Of course"
22 21-Across, at the altar
23 Bard's creations
26 Cad
30 Resistance measure
31 Pistol
32 Actress Gardner
33 Sledgehammer, e.g.
36 Red Sea nation
38 Lubricate
39 Swindle
40 Disco-style
43 Creator of a company
47 Flatfish
49 Modern coin
50 Carry on
51 Greek H
52 "— Karenina"
53 Harem rooms
54 Nev. neighbor
55 "Monopoly" card

DOWN

1 "Woe is me!"
2 — contendere
3 Ballerina's frill
4 Namesake of a sort
5 Wise ones
6 Kitten's call
7 Past
8 Toe woe
9 Loosen
10 Cancel a dele
11 — d'oeuvres
17 Asian language
19 — Moines
22 Charged bit
23 Burst
24 Cry of discovery
25 Ostrich's cousin
26 Botanical prickle
27 Hoover, for one
28 First lady
29 Sprinted
31 Come together
34 Reason for a lack of glory?
35 "My Heart Will Go On" singer
36 Second person
37 Group of nine
39 Reef material
40 Frizzy hairstyle
41 Pleased
42 Chaplin widow
43 Crumbly cheese
44 Sand formation
45 Sea eagle
46 Street
48 Calendar abbr.

Sudoku

For more/less challenging Sudoku puzzles, visit metronews.ca

HOW TO PLAY: Digits 1 through 9 will appear once in each zone – one zone is an outlined 3x3 grid within the larger puzzle grid. There are nine zones in the puzzle. Do not enter a digit into a box if it already appears elsewhere in the same zone, row across or column down the entire puzzle.

4		3				1		8
	9		1		8		5	
7			5		9			2
		8	3		5	4		
		9	6		4	3		
8			2		7			6
	1		4		6		3	
5		7				8		4

PREVIOUS DAY'S CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS:

B	A	C	H	■	S	A	Y	■
E	U	R	O	■	O	D	E	■
E	R	O	S	■	C	O	L	L
F	A	C	T	O	R	■	P	O
■	■	■	E	R	A	S	■	G
C	O	L	L	A	T	E	D	■
A	N	A	■	L	I	N	E	S
P	E	N	S	■	C	O	L	L
■	■	C	C	I	■	R	I	O
S	H	E	A	R	S	■	V	E
C	O	L	L	A	P	S	E	■
O	B	O	E	■	■	E	E	R
T	O	T	S	■	W	A	Y	■

S	C	U	M	7	4	3	1	6
T	A	R	O	1	2	6	9	8
A	R	D	S	9	5	8	7	2
P	O	R	O	U	S	3	8	9
G	E	L	■	■	■	4	2	1
R	I	C	O	5	1	4	8	3
N	O	W	6	2	9	5	7	2
N	O	W	7	6	2	5	9	1
A	G	E	N	3	4	8	6	7
T	A	N	S	8	3	5	4	1
E	R	G	O	2	6	7	3	1
S	C	A	N	9	5	8	6	4
T	A	N	S	4	9	1	2	5

On the web

For more games and 60 additional daily cartoon strips, visit metronews.ca

Metro Recipe of the Day

Seafood and Bacon Paella

INGREDIENTS:

2 tbsp (25 ml) olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
2 large garlic cloves, chopped
7 oz (200 g) bacon, chopped
1 large tomato, chopped
1 1/3 cups (325 ml) paella rice
1/2 tsp (2 ml) saffron threads, crushed
5 cups (1.25 l) hot chicken stock
14 oz (400 g) frozen cooked seafood mix

METHOD:

1. Heat oil in large, nonstick frying pan. Add onion, pepper, garlic and bacon pieces, and cook over gentle heat 5 minutes. Add tomato and cook 2 minutes.
2. Add rice and stir to coat in oil. Add saffron threads and heat for a few seconds, then pour in hot stock. Bring to boil, then stir lightly and simmer 5 minutes.
3. Mix in frozen seafood, return to gentle simmer and cook until rice is tender and liquid absorbed, stirring occasionally. Serve.

SERVES 4

rd.ca

For nutritional information on this and other great recipes, go to rd.ca or check out Key Ingredients in this month's Reader's Digest, on newsstands now!

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton sallybrompton.com

For Sally's expanded daily and weekend horoscopes, visit metronews.ca

ARIES ♈
MARCH 21-APRIL 20
Ignore your critics and do what you think is best. It might be an idea in future to keep your plans to yourself so others don't get the chance to poke their noses in.

TAURUS ♉
APRIL 21-MAY 21
The Sun in Sagittarius at this time of year tends to make you anxious but if you think about it you will realize you've got precious little to worry about.

GEMINI ♊
MAY 22-JUNE 21
You may think you know all there is to know about someone you love but they will do something today that makes you realize you don't know it all.

CANCER ♋
JUNE 22-JULY 22
The Sun may be transiting the work area of your chart at the moment but you don't have to do everything yourself.

LEO ♌
JULY 23-AUG 23
You won't lack for confidence today but what about common sense? If you take foolish risks no amount of confidence will save you.

VIRGO ♍
AUG 24-SEPT 22
Minor disagreements could easily get out of hand today, so promise yourself now that no matter what anyone says to you you won't rise to the bait.

LIBRA ♎
SEPT 23-OCT 23
There is no point blaming other people if something does not go right for you. Look at your own performance first and resist the urge to pass the buck.

SCORPIO ♏
OCT 24-NOV 22
Don't waste money on things you don't really need. Something may be bright and shiny and catch your fancy today but what good would it do you?

SAGITTARIUS ♐
NOV 23-DEC 21
Your energy levels may be high but you seem unable to decide what you should be doing with it all. But who says you have to do anything?

CAPRICORN ♑
DEC 22-JAN 20
You may be rather fearful at the moment but it won't be long before you are feeling better.

AQUARIUS ♒
JAN 21-FEB 18
Sometimes it pays to be blunt and this may be one of those times. Others won't mind your forthright language so long as they understand it.

PISCES ♓
FEB 19-MARCH 20
Keep a cool head today because something is going to happen that has others running around like it's the end of the world.

TAKE A BREAK FROM WORK
Visit metronews.ca to watch
metrotube of the day

This day in history

1939: Gone with the Wind received its premiere at Loew's Grand Theater in Atlanta, Ga., USA.
1978: President Jimmy Carter announces that the United States will recognize the People's Republic of China and cut off all relations with Taiwan.
1997: The Treaty of Bangkok is signed allowing the transformation of Southeast Asia into a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.
2001: The Leaning Tower of Pisa reopens after 11 years and $27,000,000 US to fortify it, without fixing its famous lean.
2005: Argentina's president Néstor Kirchner announces the early repayment of its external debt to the IMF.

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2008 Nissan Titan Pro 4X
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2007 Nissan Xterra
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Jan. 9, 16 & 23 • 1 wk.
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Grenada via Toronto
Grenadian by rex resorts • 3 1/2★
Hillside rm.
Jan. 17, 24 & 31 • 1 wk.
$1129
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $215

Nassau, Bahamas via Toronto
Comfort Suites Paradise Island • 3★
Continental breakfast
Supersaver rm.
Feb. 3 • 5 nts.
$1429
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $102

Antigua via Toronto
Jolly Beach Resort & Spa • 3 1/2★
All-Inclusive
Standard oceanview rm.
Feb. 28 • 1 wk.
$1629
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $243

Saint Lucia via Toronto
Coconut Bay Beach Resort & Spa • 4★
All-Inclusive
Deluxe garden view rm.
Jan. 9, 10, 11 & 18 • 1 wk.
PRIVILEGES
$1639
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $235

Aruba via Toronto
Divi Tamarijn Aruba • 3 1/2★
All-Inclusive
Deluxe oceanfront rm.
Jan. 16, 17 & 24 • 1 wk.
$1649
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $247

Barbados via Toronto
Bougainvillea Beach Resort • 4★
Deluxe studio
Feb. 2, 3, 9, 10 & 16 • 1 wk.
$1799
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $93

Almond Casuarina Beach Resort • 4★
All-Inclusive
One-bedroom suite garden view
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+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $93

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Jan. 31 • 1 wk.
$2419
+Taxes & other fees (including service charges): $280

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